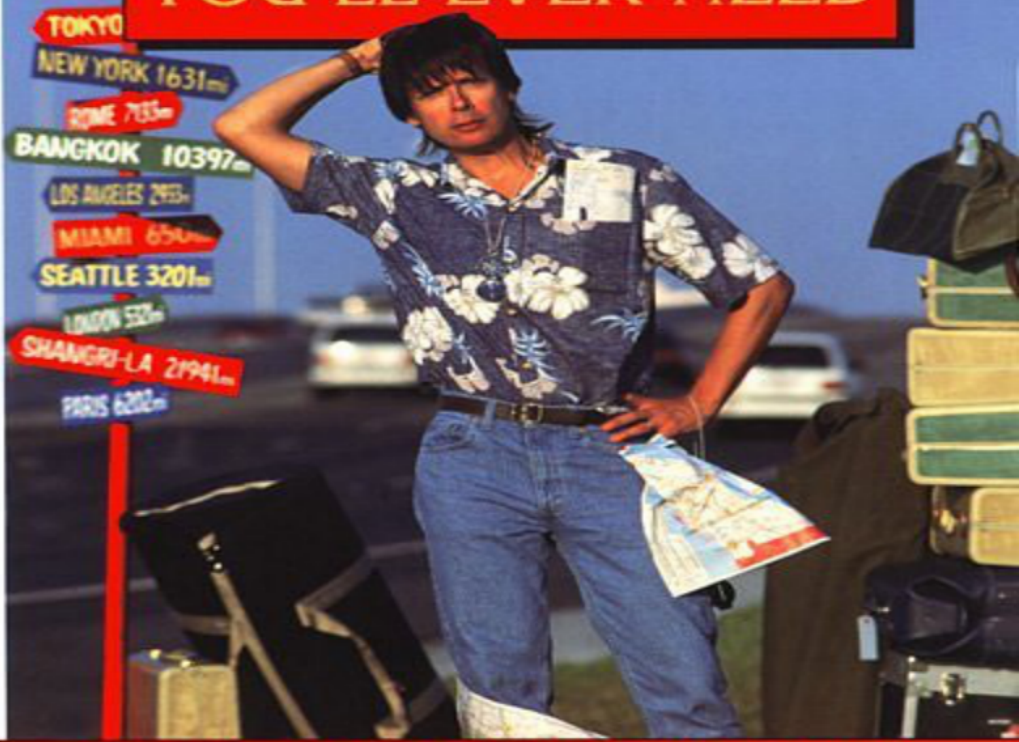
"Read it and die laughing." —*New York Daily News*

DAVE BARRY'S ONLY TRAVEL GUIDE YOU'LL EVER NEED



THE PULITZER PRIZE–WINNING HUMORIST
AND AUTHOR OF
DAVE BARRY IS FROM MARS AND VENUS

DAVE BARRY'S ONLY TRAVEL GUIDE YOU'LL EVER NEED

By
Dave Barry

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"READ 'EM AND LAUGH ..."

"If there's one thing you can count on from Dave Barry, it's extreme humor. Non-stop yuks."--Dallas News

"Dave Barry is the only living writer who makes me laugh out loud, something he accomplished on virtually every page of his latest collection of craziness--from the introduction to the final page."--The Boston Globe

"Have you ever had a vacation where you didn't lose the car keys or traveler's checks, get a seat on the plane next to a crying baby or airsick adult or end up divorced without ever going near Nevada? If so, you probably wouldn't understand what's so funny about Dave Barry's Only Travel Guide You'll Ever Need. The rest of us, however, would."--Kansas City Star

"For good old belly laughs and delightful play with cliches of the language, there's Dave Barry's Only Travel Guide You'll Ever Need."--The Boston Phoenix

ALSO BY DAVE BARRY

The Taming of the Screw
Babies and Other Hazards of Sex
Stay Fit and Healthy Until You're Dead
Claw Your Way to the Top
Bad Habits
Dave Barry's Guide to Marriage and/or Sex
Homes and Other Black Holes
Dave Barry's Greatest Hits
Dave Barry Slept Here
Dave Barry Turns 40
Dave Barry Talks Back

Dedication

This book is dedicated to Wilbur and Orville Wright, without whom air
sickness would still be just a dream.

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Introduction

Mankind has always had a yen to travel. Millions of years ago, Mankind would be sitting around the cave, eating raw mastodon parts, and he'd

say,
"Marge, I have a yen to travel." And Marge would agree instantly, because she
had frankly reached the point where if she saw one more mastodon part, she was
going to scream. So off they'd go, these primitive tourists, exploring new
territory, seeing new sights, encountering new cultures, and eventually having
their skulls bashed into tiny fragments by the Big Rock Tribe.

But that has not stopped us. No, the human race is far too stupid to be
deterred from tourism by a mere several million years of bad experiences, and
today we're traveling in larger numbers than ever. We travel because, no
matter how comfortable we are at home, there's a part of us that wants--that
needs--to see new vistas, take new tours, obtain new traveler's checks, buy
new souvenirs, order new entrees, introduce new bacteria into our intestinal
tracts, learn new words for "transfusion," and have all the other travel
adventures that make us want to French-kiss our doormats when we finally get
home.

Of course, traveling is much easier today than it used to be. A hundred
years ago, it could take you the better part of a year to get from New York to
California, whereas today, because of equipment problems at O'Hare, you can't
get there at all. Also, in the olden days a major drawback to traveling was
the fact that much of the world was occupied by foreign countries, which had
no concept whatsoever of how a country is supposed to operate. Many of them
did not accept major credit cards. Sometimes the people would not understand
plain English unless you spoke very loud. A few of these countries--it's hard

to believe this was even legal--did not have television in the hotel rooms.

So as you can imagine, traveling was often a harsh and brutal experience. In one case, a group of innocent American tourists was taken on a tour bus through a country the members later described as "either France or Sweden" and subjected to three days of looking at old, dirty buildings in cities where it was not possible to get a cheeseburger. It reached the point where the U.S. government was considering having U.S. troops, with special military minibars strapped to their backs, parachute into these countries to set up emergency restaurants.

Fortunately, however, most of these countries eventually realized the marketing advantages of not being so foreign. Today you can go to almost any country in the world and barely realize that you've left Akron, Ohio, unless of course you are so stupid as to go outside the hotel. "Never go outside the hotel": this is one of the cardinal rules of travel. Another one is: "Never board a commercial aircraft if the pilot is wearing a tank top."

These are just two of the many vital nuggets of information you'll find throughout this book. Another good thing about this book is, it doesn't mince words. The problem with most so-called experts in the travel industry is that they are--no offense--lying scum. These people want you to travel. That's how they make money. That's why they're called "the travel industry." So naturally they're going to tell you whatever they think you want to hear.

You: So, are there modern hotels in Latvia?
TRAVEL AGENT: Oh, yes. Very modern. Extremely modern.
YOU: Have you been there?
TRAVEL AGENT: Not technically, no, but I have perused almost all the way through a brochure about it, and I can assure you that the modernity of Latvian hotels is pretty much of a legend. "As modern as a Latvian hotel" is an expression that we frequently bandy about, here in the travel industry.

And then, of course, when you get there, you discover that the hotel elevator is powered by oxen, and you have to share a communal bathroom with several Baltic republics, and the toilet paper could be used to deflect small-arms fire. But at that point there are no representatives of the travel industry within a thousand miles. You'll never find them in Latvia. They spend their vacations at the mall.

Most travel guidebooks are the same way. For one thing, most of these books are filled with information that was gathered during the Truman administration. The writers never have time to update the information, because they're too busy cranking out next year's edition (NEW! REVISED! HIGHLY INACCURATE!). Also, no matter what destination these books are talking about, they'll tell you it's wonderful: "Even the most demanding traveler is bound to feel a warm glow after only a few days in Chernobyl ..."

This is not that kind of travel book. We call them as we see them. If we think a country is awful, we're going to say so, even if we've never been to this country and know virtually nothing about it. That's the kind of integrity we have. Right off the bat, for example, we're rejecting Paraguay as a destination. "Stay the hell out of Paraguay" is another one of the

cardinal rules of travel, and we'll be giving you many, many more of these
time-tested axioms as we think them up.

And what qualifies us as a travel expert? For one thing, we frequently
refer to ourselves in the plural. For another thing, we have been traveling
for many years, dating back to when we were a young boy in the early 1950's
and our father used to drive our entire family from New York to Florida in a
car that actually got smaller with every passing mile, so that by the time we
got to Georgia the interior was the size of a standard mailbox, but not as
comfortable, and the backseat hostility level between our sister and us
routinely reached the point where any object placed between us would instantly
burst into flame.

Yes, we have many fond travel memories. You are going to read about
every damned one of them. Also, we may decide to make you look at the color
slides we took of our trip to the Virgin Islands, featuring nearly two dozen
shots of the airplane wing alone.

But mostly this book is intended to help you, the modern traveler, plan
and carry out your business and vacation travel adventures with a minimum of
unpleasantness and death. Throughout this effort, we will try to remember the
famous thirteenth century tourist Marco Polo, who, having managed against all
odds and with great effort to cross Persia, the plateau of the Pamir, the
forbidden regions of Kashgar, Yarkand, and Khotan, and the Gobi Desert,
finally arrived at the legendary Kublai Khan's palace at Shang-tu, where he
uttered the words that have served as an inspiration for travelers ever

since:
"What do you mean, you don't have my reservation?"

Chapter One
Planning Your "Trip to Paradise," or Possibly Beirut

Planning is a very important part of travel. Just ask Amelia Earhart, the famous woman aviatrix ("Aviatrix" means "deceased person") who in 1937 attempted to fly around the world in a twin-engine Lockheed and disappeared somewhere in the South Pacific and was never heard from again. This kind of thing can really put a damper on your vacation, yet it can easily be prevented if you do a little advance research by asking some basic travel questions, such as:

1. Will you be flying on a twin-engine Lock- heed?
2. Will you ever be heard from again?
3. Will there be meal service?

Oh, I realize that not everybody likes to plan every step of a vacation. Some people would rather just grab a backpack and a sleeping bag, stick out their thumbs and start hitchhiking down the highway, enjoying the fun and adventure of not knowing "what's around the bend." Most of these people are dead within hours. So planning is definitely the way to go.

Step One is to decide on a destination. The two most popular travel destinations are:

1. Domestic
2. Foreign

The major advantage of domestic travel is that, with a few exceptions such as Miami, most domestic locations are conveniently situated right here in the United States. This means that, on a domestic vacation, you are never far from the convenience of American culture in the form of malls, motels, Chicken McNuggets, Charming Bathroom Tissue, carwindow suction-cup Garfield dolls, lawyers, etc. Also, the United States contains an enormous amount of natural beauty, although I do not personally prefer Nature as a vacation destination, because of various factors such as the Dirt Factor, the Insect Factor, and, of course, the Snake Factor (see Chapter Eight, "Camping: Nature's Way of Promoting the Motel Industry").

The United States also contains some history, most of which is located in special humidity-controlled rooms in Washington, D.C., heavily guarded by armed civil servants. Or, if you prefer to get "off the beaten path," you can simply hop in the car and travel the highways and byways of this great land of ours, visiting its many proud little dirtbag towns:

Dweebmont, Ohio
"Styptic Pencil Capital of the World

Often there will be local fairs and festivals where the kids can ride on the Whirl-'n'-Puke while Mom and Dad enjoy tasty local cuisine such as french fried potatoes, fried chicken, fried onion rings, fried dough, and fried frying oil fried with fried sugar.

Of course, if rides are what you're after, you'll definitely want to visit one of the major Themed Attractions, such as Six Flags over a Large Flat Region, or the world-famous Walt Disney World of Hot Irritable

Popcorn-Bloated
Families Waiting in Enormous Lines (see Chapter Four, "Disney World on
$263,508 a Day"). Many of these attractions feature exhibits simulating
foreign nations such as Europe, thus enabling you to experience exactly what
it would be like to be in another country, provided that it was a foreign
country staffed by Americans and located inside a Themed Attraction.

But if you prefer the "real thing," you'll want to choose a foreign travel destination. The major problem here, as I mentioned in the Introduction, is that foreign destinations tend to contain enormous quantities
of foreigners (In the form of Japanese tourists). There's nothing you can do
about this except grin and bear it, unless you're in some foreign country
where grinning is considered rude and is punishable by death, in which case
you should frown and bear it. or stick a finger up each nostril and bear it,
or whatever they do when they bear it in that country.

But that's exactly the problem. As an American who was raised in America
and attended American schools--where, despite years of instruction, the only
thing you learned how to say in a foreign language is "The dog has eaten my
brother"--you will often find yourself totally disoriented in foreign situations. Europe, for example, is filled with knots of confused Americans,
squinting at menus with no more comprehension than a sea gull examining the
Space Shuttle ("What the hell does this mean?" "I think it means 'Chicken of
the Hot Trouser Parts.'").

Also, you will have to accept the fact that, in foreign countries, you will never have the vaguest idea how much anything costs. All foreign
countries have confusing money, with names like the Pound, the Yen,

the Libra,
the Mark, the Frank, the Duane, the Doubloon, and the Kilometer, all of which
appear to have been designed by preschool children. Not one of these monetary
units is equal to a dollar, or anything else, and all of them change in value
on an hourly basis. This is all a result of the Marshall Plan, which was set
up by General Marshall Plan after World War II as a means of making the entire
rest of the world rich at our expense, the idea being that Americans traveling
abroad would be so disoriented by foreign currency that every now and then one
of them will buy a single croissant and leave a tip large enough to enable the
waiter to retire for life.

But that's the fun of traveling abroad: the sense of romance and mystery
that comes from being an out of-it bozo, from not knowing for sure whether the
sign you're looking at says PUBLIC PARK or RADIOACTIVE WASTE AREA. One time I
was with a group of five people driving around Germany, and it took us an
entire week to figure out that "Einbahnstrasse" meant "One-Way Street." We'd
be driving around some German city, frowning at our map, scratching our pointy
American heads and saying, "Geez! We're on Einbahnstrasse again!" Ha ha!
What a bunch of gooberheads we were! Fortunately, everybody in Germany,
including domestic animals, speaks English better than the average U.S. high
school graduate, So we were able to get clear directions from passing
pedestrians. At times like these, you might tend to feel culturally inferior,
as an American, but it's always heartening to remember that, no matter what
country you're in, it probably doesn't rank anywhere near the U.S.A. in the

nuclear-warhead department (also we have Wayne Newton).

PLANNING YOUR TRAVEL BUDGET

The standard formula for computing travel costs is to figure out the total amount of available money you have, total, then multiply this by at least six. But even this formula is probably going to give you a low estimate, because you usually have unexpected expences. I do want to stress that, whatever amount it was, I am certain the nun turned it directly over to the church (Or she bought a Ferrari). My point is that whenever and wherever you travel, you're going to have unanticipated expenses, and you need to anticipate them. Fortunately the Visa and MasterCard people have a fine program for travelers, under which you can charge everything, and then when you get back, you simply pay them small convenient amounts for several years, which turns out to be nowhere near enough, so they confiscate your children, which is not entirely a bad thing (see Chapter Four, "Traveling as a Family").

TRAVELER'S CHECKS

Travelers checks are very impressive pieces of paper that are backed by the full faith and credit of actor Karl Malden. They are accepted at thousands of shopping locations around the world, although almost never the location that you personally are shopping in. Nevertheless, traveler's checks are very popular with those travelers who have the brains of frozen vegetables. You've seen these people in those American Express traveler's check commercials:

FIRST TRAVELER: Oh no!
SECOND TRAVELER: What's wrong!
FIRST TRAVELER: I left my wallet unguarded on a cafe table here in

the middle
of this squalid, poverty-ridden, crime-infested foreign city, and now
it's gone!
SECOND TRAVELER: But that's impossible!
KARL MALDEN (to camera): Hi, I'm Karl Malden.
FIRST TRAVELER: Look! It's Raymond Burr!
KARL MALDEN: If you lose your American Express traveler's checks, you can call
for an immediate refund.
FIRST TRAVELER: But we don't even know how to operate a telephone!
SECOND TRAVELER: I don't even remember which Traveler I am! I think I'm the
Second Traveler!
FIRST TRAVELER: No! I'm the Second Traveler!
KARL MALDEN (tO camera): American Express traveler's checks. A lot of people
never even figure out how to cash them.

WORKING WITH A TRAVEL AGENT

You should definitely have a travel agent. Why go through all the hassle of dealing with airlines, hotels, and rental-car agencies yourself, only to see the arrangements get all screwed up, when with just a single phone call you can have a trained professional screw them up for you?

No, seriously, travel agents are wonderful. At least mine is. Her name is Ramona, and I'd literally be lost without her. I'll be on a business trip, and I'll wake up in a strange hotel room in bed with traces of minibar cheeses (At $127.50 per ounce) in my hair, and in a disoriented panic I'll call Ramona, and we'll have the following conversation:

ME: Where am I?
RAMONA (checking her computer): You're in Houston.
ME (alarmed): Why?
RAMONA: You're on a business trip.
ME: Can I come home yet?

RAMONA (checking her computer): No. You have to go to Detroit.
ME (very alarmed): Detroit?
RAMONA (checking her computer): And get that cheese out of your hair.

I always do what Ramona says, because she has the computer. Ramona could ship me off to the Falkland Islands if she felt like it.

Ramona also is good at attempting to explain the airline fare system, which is governed by a powerful, state-of-the-art computer that somebody apparently spilled a pitcher of Hawaiian Punch into the brain of, and it has been insane ever since. I base this statement on the fact that if I fly from Miami to, for example, Tampa, the round-trip fare is often hundreds of dollars more than what it costs to fly from Miami to, say, Singapore. This makes no sense. Singapore is in a completely different continent (Possibly Africa), whereas Tampa is so close to Miami that our stray bullets frequently land there. And what is worse, there is never just one fare to Tampa. There are dozens of them, and they are constantly mutating. and the more Ramona explains them to me, the more disoriented I become.

ME: I need to go to Tampa on Thursday.
RAMONA (checking her computer): No, not Thursday.
mE: No?
RAMONA: No, because there's a $600 penalty if you fly on a Thursday during a month whose name contains two or more vowels following two straight quarters of increased unemployment unless you are a joint taxpayer filing singly with two or more men on base provided that you spend at least one Saturday night in a hotel room within twelve feet of a malfunctioning ice

machine and you undergo a ritual initiation ceremony wherein airline
ticket agents dance around you and put honey-roasted peanuts up your
nose.

ME: Book me on the Singapore flight.

RENTING A CAR

Renting a car offers many attractive advantages to the traveler: independence, convenience, dependability, and a sudden, massive lowering of the IQ. I know what I'm talking about here. I live in Miami, and every winter we have a huge infestation of rental-car drivers, who come down here seeking warm weather and the opportunity to make sudden left turns without signaling across six lanes of traffic into convenience stores (No, not into the parking lots. Into the stores). My wife and I have affectionately nicknamed these people "Alamos," because so many of them seem to rent their cars from Alamo, which evidently requires that every driver leave several major brain lobes as a deposit. We'll be driving along, and the driver in front of us will engage in some maneuver that is boneheaded even by the standards of Miami (official motoring motto: "Death Before Yielding"), and we'll shout, "Look out! Alamos!" We're tempted to stay off the highways altogether during tourist season, just stockpile food and spend the entire winter huddled in our bedrooms, but we're not sure we'd be safe there.

Not that I feel superior to the Alamos. I've rented many cars myself, and I have to admit that as soon as I get behind the wheel, I go into Bozo Mode. For one thing, I am instantly lost, and the only guidance I have is the rental-car-agency map, the sole function of which apparently is to

show you
the location of the rental-car agency. So I'm disoriented, plus I'm constantly trying to adjust the mirrors, seat, air conditioning, steering wheel, etc., plus--this is the most important part--I have to find a good radio station. This means I am devoting only about 2 percent of my brain to
actually driving the car. And thus I--a person who tends to be extremely
critical of other people's driving--am transformed into an Alamo, drifting
along at 27 miles per hour in the left lane of the interstate, with my left
blinker on, trying to locate the FM button. Maybe, as a warning to other
drivers, the federal government should require that all rental cars must have
giant orange question marks sticking up out of their roofs.

CHOOSING A CAR-RENTAL COMPANY

The car-rental industry is extremely competitive, and often you can find
some really good "deals" by keeping your eyes "peeled" for advertisements that
look like this:

> Why Pay More?
> Rent a Car for Just $3.99 a Week!!
> Including Unlimited Mileage!!
> Big Bob's Car Rental & Miniature Golf & Full-Body Massage
>
> Certain restrictions apply to this offer, such as to get the actual car you have to ride our "Courtesy Van," which runs only during Lent, from the airport to our rental facility, which is in the Soviet Union, where you will have to wait in line behind people who have been there since the Ford administration because our rental fleet consists of a 1971 Plymouth Valiant with a tendency to catch fire, so we definitely recommend the insurance.

As a "smart shopper," you will definitely save "big money" by taking
advantage of bargains such as these, although you should of course insist that

the agency person explain the terms of the rental agreement before you sign
it:

You: What does this mean?
AGENCY PERSON: What does what mean?
You: This part here, where it says, "Renter agrees that we get to keep his
house."
AGENCY PERSON: Oh, that. Nothing.
You (relieved): Whew.

TYPES OF LUGGAGE

The type of luggage you carry says a lot about you. For example, if you're carrying somebody else's luggage, it says you're a thief.

No, seriously, luggage is important, which is why most frequent travelers
spend their entire lives looking for Exactly the Right Piece of Luggage, the
one that is nice and compact but holds a lot of stuff. This is a waste of time, of course, because the truth is that a piece of luggage is nothing but a
bag or a box with a handle on it, and under the laws of physics, which are
strictly enforced in luggage, the size of the bag or the box determines how
much it will hold, as can be seen in the following chart:

SIZE OF LUGGAGE UNIT	AMOUNT OF STUFF LUGGAGE UNIT WILL HOLD
Small	Small amount
Medium	Medium amount
Large	Large amounts But still not enough

The infrequent traveler generally accepts these limitations and purchases
one of those enormous, hard-sided suitcases that have wheels and weigh about
87 pounds even when they're empty. But your frequent traveler never abandons
the quest to find a miracle luggage unit that can hold more than it can

actually hold. Over the course of a lifetime the frequent traveler will purchase dozens of luggage units, frequently from advertisements in airline in-flight magazines. You've probably seen the advertisements. There's a picture of what appears to be an ordinary carry-on suitcase, underneath which are about 70,000 words, which begin:

> AMAZING LUGGAGE BREAKTHROUGH!
>
> A recent scientific discovery by researchers at the Stanford University School of Luggage Science has made possible the REVOLUTIONARY new Laser 300OX Total Carry-on Wardrobe Unit! Although smaller than a standard clarinet case, this incredible unit, thanks to advanced luggage technology, can easily hold: Eight men's suits OR 14 women's full-length evening gowns PLUS All the shirts, socks, ties, underwear, and clothing accessories you would need for two terms in Congress PLUS All your toiletries PLUS An actual working toilet And that's not all! How many times have you said to yourself, as a busy business traveler: "Why can't they design a carry-on bag with a space for my tennis rackets, golf clubs, skis, and volleyball equipment?" Well, look no farther, because the Laser 300OX ...

And so on. Ordinarily you would take one look at this kind of advertisement and say, hey, get serious. But in the airplane environment, where you have nothing else to do except watch the movie, (Rocky XVII, the one where he has surgery so his eyelids can open all the way) you find yourself reading all the way through it, and by the time you're on your third Bloody Mary, and you've reached the part where the advertisement claims that this suitcase will do your tax returns for you, you're thinking, "Hey! This could be the answer to my luggage needs!" So you whip out your Visa or MasterCard and fill out the order form, and six to ten weeks later you receive: a

bag
with a handle. A small bag with a handle. Which, if you really pack it
right, will hold two pairs of socks PLUS your dental floss. I know what I'm
talking about! I have seventeen of these things!

HOW MUCH LUGGAGE YOU CAN CARRY ON A COMMERCIAL AIRLINE FLIGHT

Federal Airline Administration regulations state that each passenger may
have up to 17,000 pounds of carry-on luggage provided that he or she can jam
it all into the overhead baggage compartment. I am a veteran traveler, but I
am still amazed at how much stuff some people will try to get up there.
Entire households, sometimes. These people are always directly in front of
me. "What do you mean, I can't carry this on?!" they'll say to the airline
personnel. "I ALWAYS carry this on!"

"Sir," the airline personnel will say, "that's a lawn tractor.

"But look!" the person will say. "It fits in the overhead baggage compartment!" And the person will actually attempt to shove it in there,
which is of course impossible because (a) the tractor is too large, and (b)
the compartment already contains some other passenger's upright piano. But
this will not stop the person from trying. No human emotion is more powerful
than the grim determination of an airline passenger attempting to shove an
inappropriate object into the overhead baggage compartment.

WHAT TO PACK

There are two major schools of thought on how to pack for traveling.
These are known technically as "my school" and "my wife's school."

My school
of packing is that you should never carry more things than you can fit into a
standard sandwich bag. This way you never put yourself in a position where
you have to turn your belongings over to a commercial airline's crack Luggage
Hiding Department (traces of airline luggage have been found on Mars). So I
travel very light, and I've found that this is really not a problem, once I
get adjusted to the stench resulting from wearing the same shirts and socks
and, of course, underwear for as long as two weeks running. The advantage of
this is that I get plenty of room to stretch out on airplanes, because nobody
will sit near me. The disadvantage is that the flight attendants also stay
away, preferring to serve my dinner entree by flipping it at me Frisbee-style
from as far as 25 feet away, and some of those airline entrees are hard enough
to kill a person (Such as lasagna).

My wife, on the other hand, would not think of leaving the house for even
a half hour without sufficient possessions in her purse alone to establish a
comfortable wilderness homestead. So when we travel, she packs many, many
items. She buys these giant suitcases, manufactured by shipbuilders, and she
packs them with items for every conceivable contingency. Like, if we're going
someplace in the tropics, she'll naturally pack an entire set of lightweight
outfits, but she'll also pack an entire set of medium-weight outfits, in case
we have a cool snap; and a set of heavy outfits, in case we get locked inside
a meat freezer; and a waffle iron, in case we get hungry for waffles while
we're in there; and so on. So we generally arrive at the airport with

virtually all of our worldly possessions, looking like Cambodian refugees, except that we appear to be actually taking Cambodia with us. Our carry-on luggage alone is enough to prevent many planes from ever leaving the ground. They'll taxi down the runway, gaining speed, then, after a violent grunting effort to take off, they'll continue right on taxiing, sometimes right into a harbor. This doesn't worry us, however, because my wife always brings plenty of scuba equipment.

BONUS PACKING TIP:
How to Pack a Suit So it Won't Come Out Wrinkled

Lay the suit on its back on a flat surface such as a tennis court. Take the sleeves and place them at the side. Take the left sleeve and place it on the suit's hip, and hold the right sleeve over the suit's head as though the suit is waving in a jaunty manner. Now put both sleeves straight up over the suit's head and shout, "Touchdown!" Ha ha! Isn't this fun? You may feel stupid, but trust me, you're not half as stupid as the people who think they can fold a suit so it won't come out wrinkled.

Chapter Two
How to Speak a Foreign Language in Just 30 Minutes WITHOUT NECESSARILY HAVING ANY IDEA WHAT YOU ARE SAYING

One of the great things about being an American, aside from the constitutionally guaranteed freedom to have obscene bumper stickers, is that so many foreign people speak our language (English). You can walk the streets of just about any major city in the world, and as soon as the natives

realize
that you're an American, they'll make you feel right at home.

"Stick them up!" they'll say. "Please to be handing over your American
Express traveler's checks! Don't leave home without them!"

Yes, they are clever, those natives. Nevertheless, you may sometimes
find yourself in a foreign situation wherein members of the local population,
because of a poor educational system or sheer laziness, have not learned to
speak your language fluently. This can lead to serious problems, as when for
example you're in Spain, attempting to obtain a chicken-salad sandwich, and
you wind up with a dish whose name, when you look it up in your
Spanish/English dictionary, turns out to mean "Eel with the Big Abscess."
This is why I strongly recommend that before you travel abroad, you learn to
speak a foreign language, ideally the same one that is spoken in whatever
country you're going to.

Of course you probably think it's hard to learn another language, because
you spent years studying foreign languages in high school, and all you can
remember is being forced to confiscate verbs and memorize those moronic
dialogues wherein everybody seemed to be obsessed with furniture:

PIERRE: Voici le bureau de mon oncle. ("Here is the bureau of my uncle.")
JACQUES: Le bureau de votre oncle est right prochain de la table de ma tante.
("The bureau of your uncle is right next to the table of my aunt.")
MARIE: Qui donne un merde? ("Who gives a shit?")

I took an estimated two thousand years of high school French, and when I
finally got to France, I discovered that I didn't know one single phrase

that
was actually useful in a real-life French situation. I could say, "Show me
the fish of your brother Raoul," but I could not say, "Madame, if you poke me
one more time with that umbrella I am going to jam it right up one of your
primary nasal passages," which would have been extremely useful.

So what you need, as a traveler, is to learn practical foreign expressions. Let's say you're in a very swanky Paris restaurant that has
earned the coveted "Five-Booger" ranking from the prestigious Michelin Guide
to How Snotty a Restaurant Is. You cannot be asking these people to show you
the fish of their brother Raoul. You will want to use simple, foolproof phrases such as the following.

PRACTICAL FRENCH RESTAURANT PHRASES

Garr,on! Je suis capable de manger un cheval! ("Waiter! I could eat a horse!")
Apportez-moi quelques aliments franqaise ici pronto sur la double! ("Bring me
some French food immediately!")
Mettez-le smaque dabbe sur la table. ("Put it smack dab on the table.")
Attendez une minute au jus dernier! ("Wait just a darned minute!")
Qu'est-ce 1'enfer que c'est? ("What is this the hell that this is?")
Attemptez-vous A yanquer ma chaine, boudet? ("Are you trying to yank my chain,
buddy?")
Je donne madam CHAT plus viande que cette! ("I give my damn CAT more meat than
this!")
Sacre moo! Ce EST mon chat! ("Holy cow! This IS my cat!")

OTHER PRACTICAL FRENCH PHRASES

Nous sommes suppose a faire peepee ICI? ("We're supposed to pee HERE?")
Mais nous sommes droit dans le friggant RUE. ("But we're right in the goshdarn
STREET.")

y a des RELIGIEUSES regardant nous. ("There are NUNS watching us.")
Dites, cette religieuse est hot. ("Say, that nun is fairly attractive.")
Peut-etre j'ai been en France trop longue. ("Perhaps I have been in France too
long.")

PRACTICAL SPANISH PHRASES

In the Restaurant:

Camarero, hay una mosca en mi sopa. ("Waiter, there is a fly in my soup.")
Pero esa mosca es atarado al pantalones. ("But this fly is attached to a pair
of pants.")

Riding Public Transportation:

Jey, no es anybody pilotando ese autobus? ("Hey, isn't anybody driving this
bus?")
ESE es el piloto? ("THAT'S the driver?")
iEl hombre que dormir en el charco de saliva? ("The man sleeping in the Puddle
of saliva?.")
Quiza deberias empujar los frenos. ("Maybe we should apply the brakes.")
Que the hell usted decir, una cabra ha comido los frenos? ("What do you mean,
a goat ate the brakes?")
Porque estan mi frente marcas de preguntas al reves? ("Why are my front
question marks upside down?")

During Festivals:

Mi (esposo, esposa) es been tramplado por toros. ("My [husband, wife] has been
trampled by bulls.")
No, no estoy quejarsando. ("No, I'm not complaining.")

Emergency Medical Phrases:

Muchacho, es mi booty dolorido desde ese caso de los trots! ("Boy, is

my butt
sore from this diarrhea!")
iEl hace yo pasar como el tarde Campos de Totie! ("It's making me walk like
the late Totie Fields!")

PRACTICAL ITALIAN PHRASES

Non desear chiunque ferire or nothing. ("We don't want anybody should get
hurt.")
Tuo fratello Raoul dormi con los pesces. ("Your brother Raoul sleeps with the
fishes.")

PRACTICAL GERMAN PHRASES

Achtung! ("Gesundheit!")
Enschreitenblatten Schalteniedlich Verkehrsge sellschaft! ("Ha ha!")
Ich veranlassenarbeitenworken mein Mojo. ("I have got my mojo working.")

Chapter Three
Air Travel
(OR: WHY BIRDS NEVER LOOK TRULY RELAXED)

You're probably not going to believe this, but there are still some people, in this modern day and age, who are afraid of air travel. Ha ha! Are
they a bunch of Nervous Nellies, or what?

Oh, sure, air travel seems dangerous to the ignorant layperson, inasmuch
as it involves hurtling through the air seven miles straight up trapped inside
an object the size of a suburban ranch home in total defiance of all known
laws of physics. But statistics show that, when you're in an airplane, you're
actually four times as safe as when you're driving your car on an interstate
highway (Provided that you are driving drunk and blindfolded)!

Nevertheless, many of us, even veteran fliers, tend to be a little edgy about air travel these days, because it seems as if hardly a day goes by that we don't pick up a newspaper and see headlines like:

ENGINE FALLS OFF PLANE
WING FALLS OFF PLANE
PILOT SUCKED OUT OF PLANE
PLANE POSSESSED BY DEMONS FAA Orders Exorcism of Entire L-1011 Fleet

But the truth is that, thanks to improvements in technology, air travel today is safer than it has been at any time for the past three weeks. Yes, we've come a long way since the Age of Aviation began back in the historic year of 19-something in Kitty Hawk, North or South Carolina, when two young mechanics named Wilbur and Orville Wright, using some canvas and old bicycle parts, constructed the very first airline omelet. There have been many important commercial-aviation innovations since then, including:

Airline magazines featuring articles with titles like "Akron: Meeting Yesterday's Challenges Tomorrow."

"Turbulence." This is what pilots announce that you have encountered when your plane strikes an object in midair. You'll be flying along, and there will be an enormous, shuddering WHUMP, and clearly the plane has rammed into an airborne object at least the size of a water buffalo, and the pilot will say, "Folks, we're encountering a little turbulence." Meanwhile they are up there in the cockpit trying desperately to clean waterbuffalo organs off the windshield.

Frequent-flier programs, wherein each time you take a commercial flight, you earn a certain number of miles, plus bonus miles if you actually reach your intended destination within your lifetime. After you've

accumulated
enough miles, you can redeem them for another flight, unless you have the
intelligence of a turnip, in which case you'll remain in your recreation
room, where it's safe.

The Baggage Carousel, where passengers traditionally gather at the end of a
flight to spend several relaxing hours watching the arrival of luggage
from some other flight, which comes randomly spurting out of a mysterious
troll-infested tunnel that is apparently connected to another airport,
possibly in a different dimension.

The baby in the seat behind you whose parents are obviously poking it with hat
pins because there is no other way that a child could shriek that loudly
all the way from New York to Los Angeles.

The 475-pound man in the adjacent seat who smells like a municipal landfill
and whose forearm (which by itself is the size of Roseanne Barr) spends
the entire flight oozing, like the Blob, over the armrest until it
occupies virtually your entire seat and starts absorbing your in-flight
meal through some of its larger pores. This in itself is not a bad
thing, because airline food is not intended for human consumption. It's
intended as a form of in-flight entertainment, wherein the object is to
guess what it is, starting with broad categories such as "mineral" and
"linoleum." When the flight attendants ask, "Do you want roast beef or
lasagna?" they don't mean, "Do you want roast beef, or do you want
lasagna?" They mean: "Do you want this dinner substance, which could be
roast beef, or it could be lasagna? Or possibly peat moss?"

And speaking of airline food, another important aviation development has

been: The barf bag. Early barf bags were large canvas sacks; a severely airsick passenger would be placed inside, and the bag would then be sealed up and, in an act of aviation mercy, shoved out the cargo door at 12,000 feet. Today's passenger doesn't get that kind of personalized service, and must place a small bag over his nose and mouth in hopes of cutting off his oxygen supply.

Despite these strides forward, there have been a few problems caused by the belt-tightening in the airline industry that has resulted from "deregulation," a new government policy under which the only requirement to purchase an airline is that you have to produce two forms of identification. Even Donald Trump was allowed to purchase an airline, which he immediately named after himself ("Air Jerk"). This led to some dramatic aviation moments when Trump got into financial difficulty and had to sell some of his aircraft while they were still in the air. ("This is your captain speaking. We've just been advised that instead of Boston, we will be landing in Iran. We regret any incon ...")

Of course, this kind of adventure only adds to the fun of flying. My family has had many fun flights, including an extremely exciting one in which we went from Miami to Honolulu via the following itinerary, which I am not making up:

1. We flew from Miami to Denver on a plane that seemed to be working fine, so naturally they made us get off of it and get on another plane that was supposed to fly the rest of the way to Honolulu. This happened to be on

Halloween. "Never Fly on Halloween," that is our new aviation motto.

2. They put a bunch of fuel on our new plane, and we got on it. One of the flight attendants was wearing devil ears, which struck us as hilarious at the time but which we later on realized was an omen. "Never Get on a Flight Where a Crew Member Is Wearing Devil Ears" is another one of our aviation mottoes.

3. When we got out to the end of the runway, the pilot announced that we had too much fuel, which struck us ignorant laypersons as odd, because we were under the impression that having a lot of fuel is good, especially when you're flying over a major ocean such as the Pacific. Nevertheless we went back to the gate and got off the plane while they removed fuel, apparently using eyedroppers, because it took them two hours.

4. We got back on the plane and the pilot announced that--remember I am not making this up--we were going to fly to Los Angeles to get some more fuel. So needless to say ...

5. We landed in San Francisco. There they told us (why not?) that we had to change planes, so we all got off, only to be met by a gate attendant wearing an entire devil costume, which was seeming less and less amusing.

Also the pilot was not inspiring a great deal of confidence in us. You know how pilots are generally trim, military-looking individuals who remain up in the cockpit looking aloof but competent? Well, our pilot was a chunky, slightly disheveled man who looked like a minor character in Police Academy XIII. He was walking around the lounge area, chatting with us passengers as though he had nothing else to do, and holding a

computer printout the thickness of War and Peace, which he announced was our "flight plan," although we couldn't help but note that (a) he wasn't reading it, and (b) pages were falling out of it. Some of us were starting to suspect that he wasn't a real pilot at all, but merely a man who had dressed up in a realistic pilot costume for Halloween. But we were desperate, so we followed him aboard yet another plane. As we taxied out to the runway, the pilot said--I swear--"Hopefully, this one will fly all the way."

6. So we took off from San Francisco, and for a while everything was fine except for the aroma coming from the seat behind us, which was occupied by a wretched woman who was attempting to get to Australia with two very small children, whom she evidently intended to enter in the World Pooping Championships. But this ceased to be our main concern when, after about an hour over the Pacific, which is famous for not having anyplace on it where you can land, the pilot announced that we had a "minor engine problem."

7. So we turned around and headed back toward, you guessed it, San Francisco, which we were beginning to think of as home. All the way back the pilot kept reassuring us about how minor this engine problem was, so you can imagine our excitement when we got to the airport and saw what appeared to be the entire San Francisco Fire Department lining the runway.

8. We landed safely and scuttled off the plane to be greeted, once again, by the devil, who was now being assisted by a witch. Of course by this point, Hell seemed like a major improvement over commercial air travel.

9. Several hours later our pilot led us onto yet another plane. By this point a lot of people had dropped out of the flight, but we were determined to see what would ultimately happen, with a lot of smart money betting that this would become the first commercial airliner ever to be sucked into a black hole. During the Preflight Safety Lecture--I swear this is true--the flight attendant said, "If you gotta go, go with a smile."
10. We took off from San Francisco again and flew back out over the Pacific, where, to judge from the amount of "turbulence," we flew smack into a whole herd of airborne water buffalo. The in-flight movie was The Dead Poets Society.
11. We landed in Honolulu, 21 hours after we left Miami. To apologize for our inconvenience, the flight attendants gave us coupons that were good for discounts on future flights, although they new full well that we were all planning to return to the mainland via canoe.

I do not mean to suggest here that all flights take this long to reach their destinations. Some of them never reach their destinations. And I understand that there are even some, the ones that I personally am not on, that arrive right on schedule. YOu just never know, which is why air travel is the ongoing adventure that it is.

AIRPORT SECURITY

The important thing to remember about airport security procedures is that they have been created for your protection. Sure, it can be annoying to have to stop at the security checkpoint when you're on a tight schedule, but look at it this way: If the security personnel do their job properly, they just might cause YOU tO miss your plane, thereby Possibly saving your

life.

The heart of the airport security system is the metal detector, a device that shoots invisible rays into your body. These rays are perfectly harmless, according to security personnel, although you notice that THEY never go through the metal detector. In fact, when nobody's around, they use it to cook their lunch. So most travel experts recommend that, to avoid turning your internal organs into baked lasagna, you go through the detector as fast as possible, maybe even back up fifty yards or so and get a running start.

The purpose of the metal detector is to make sure that you're not carrying a bomb or a deadly weapon or a set of car keys. If the detector detects one of these items, it will beep; security personnel will ask you to place the item on a plastic tray and go through the detector again. Your item will be returned to you on the other side ("Wait, sir! You forgot your bomb!")

How to Act While Going Through Security

Security personnel are on the lookout for people who fit the Profile of Suspected Terrorists, which is as follows:

PROFILE OF SUSPECTED TERRORISTS

SEX: Male
AGE: 15 through 74
LOOKS SUSPICIOUS: Yes

As a smart traveler who wishes to avoid the inconvenience of being taken to a small airless interrogation room and having electrical wiring attached to your various genitals, you should make every effort to avoid fitting

this
profile. This means that if you are, for example, a male, you should try to
deflect the security personnel's attention away from this fact via such techniques as:

Wearing a dress (This is how Oliver North handles it).
Periodically remarking out loud to nobody in particular: "I certainly have a
lot of body hair, for a woman!"

Baggage Searches

At the security checkpoint, your carry-on baggage must be placed on a
conveyor belt and passed through an X-ray machine so the security personnel
can see if you are carrying questionable items, because if you are, federal
law requires them to open up your luggage and root around among your personal
belongings like starving boars in a full Dumpster. If they find anything
suspicious, For Your Own Protection they will ask you certain standard
security questions, such as:

"What's this stain in your underwear? Cheez Whiz?"
"This is a vibrator? I never seen a vibrator this big! HEY, NORM! TAKE A
LOOK AT THIS LADY'S VIBRATOR!"

"For Kids Only":
Fun with Airport Security Personnel

Airport security personnel are chosen for their sense of humor, and there
is nothing they enjoy so much as a good joke. A fun game you kids can play
with them is "Uncle Ted." What you do is, when you get near the security
checkpoint, you walk up to a passenger selected at random and say in a loud
voice, "Uncle Ted, can I see the bomb again?" Ha ha! Those wacky,

fun-loving
security personnel will sure come running! They might even take "Uncle Ted"
for a ride in the electric cart! They might even take YOU for a ride in the
electric cart if you mention the detonator in Mom's purse!

NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER

In this chapter Mr. Barry has been quite critical of commercial air travel, so we have decided, in the interest of fairness, to allow the airline
industry an opportunity to respond. The following point-by-point rebuttal was
written by Mr. M. Duane LeGrout, president of the American Association of
Associated Airline Companies in Association with Each Other.

AN OPEN LETTER TO AIRLINE PASSENGERS

Dear Airline Passenger:

We will be starting this rebuttal in just a few moments. Please remain
in the area, as we are almost ready to start this point-by-point rebuttal.
Thank you.

We apologize for the delay. We will begin rebutting very soon now, and
we are grateful for your patience.

We have an announcement for those readers who are waiting for the
point-by-point rebuttal. We are experiencing a minor equipment problem with
our word processor at this time, but we do expect to have an announcement very
soon and we do ask for your continued patience. In the meantime, we regret to
announce that we have overbooked this rebuttal, and we are asking for readers
who are willing to give up their space in exchange for an opportunity to read

two future rebuttals on a topic of your choice. Thank you, and we expect to
have another announcement shortly.

Okay, we do apologize for any inconvenience, but we have been informed
that the word-processor problems have been corrected and we will begin
rebutting any moment now. We ask that those of you with small shrieking
children pLeAse asssidaisaas *(*A*&AA hey can someBoDy fiX this goddam

REBUTTAL CANCELED! SEE AGENT!

Sincerely,

M. Duane LeGrout
President

Chapter Four
Traveling as a Family
(OR: NO, WE ARE NOT THERE YET!)

Family travel has been an American tradition ever since the days when
hardy pioneer families crossed the Great Plains in oxen-drawn covered wagons,
braving harsh weather, hostile Native Americans, unforgiving terrain, scarce
food, and--worst of all--the constant whining coming from the backseat:

"Are we there yet?"
"Hey! THESE plains aren't so great!"
"Mom, Ezra is making hostile gestures at those Native Americans!"
"Are we almost there?"
"Mom! Rebecca dumped some unforgiving terrain into my scarce food!"
"PLEASE can we stop here and settle Kansas please please PLEASE??"
"Yuck! We're eating bison again?"
"When are we going to be there?"

"Mom! Little Ben put oxen poop in his hair!"

Yes, it was brutally hard, but those brave pioneers kept going, day after day, month after month, never stopping, and do you know why? Because Dad was driving, that's why. When Dad is driving, he never stops for anything. This is part of the Guy Code of Conduct. A lot of those early pioneer dads, when they got to California, drove their wagons directly into the Pacific Ocean and would probably have continued to Japan if it hadn't been for shark damage to the oxen.

Another part of the Guy Code of Conduct still in effect is that only Dad can drive. If necessary, Dad will permanently bond his hands to the steering wheel with Krazy Glue to prevent Mom from driving, because he knows that if she had the wheel, she might suffer a lapse of judgment and decide to actually stop for something, such as food or sleep or medical care for little Jennifer, whose appendix has apparently burst. No, Dad will not allow minor distractions such as these to interfere with his vacation schedule, which looks like this:

6:00-6:15 A.M.: See Yellowstone National Park
6:15-6:25 A.M.: See Grand Canyon
6:15-7:00 A.M.: See Latin America

What Dad means by "see," of course, is "drive past at 67 miles per hour." Dad feels it is a foolish waste of valuable vacation time to get out of the car and actually go look at an attraction such as the White House, Niagara Falls, the Louvre, etc.

I myself have been guilty of this behavior. Once we were driving

across
the country and we got to South Dakota, a dirt-intensive state so sparsely
populated that merely by entering it you automatically become a member of the
legislature. A major tourist attraction in South Dakota is something called
"Wall Drug," which is basically a group of stores advertised by a string of
billboards that begins somewhere outside of the solar system. My wife, Beth,
wanted to stop. Her reasoning was that we had driven hundreds of miles that
day with absolutely no activity to relieve our boredom except eating Stuckey's
miniature pecan pies at the rate of approximately three pies per person per
hour. And so as we drew closer to Wall Drug, passing billboard after
billboard--157 miles to go, 153 miles to go, 146 miles to go, etc.--her
anticipation mounted, until finally we were there, and Beth's excitement
reached a fever pitch because this was the only point of interest for
hundreds, perhaps thousands, of miles, and of course I elected to whiz right
past it, as though I had an important appointment elsewhere in South Dakota to
pick up an urgent load of manure.

You know how certain incidents become permanent sore points in a
marriage? Like for example a husband will never let his wife forget the time
she left a $2,000 video camera where the baby could get hold of it and drop it
into the toilet? That's the status that the Wall Drug Incident has achieved
in our marriage. My wife feels that we're the only people in the history of
interstate travel who failed to stop there, and, fifteen years later, she is
still bitter. If she ever files for a divorce, this is the first incident
she'll mention to the lawyer. And that's the wonderful thing about family
travel: it provides you with experiences that will remain locked

forever in the scar tissue of your mind. Especially if you travel with children. We traveled extensively with our son Robert when he was very young, and I have many, many vivid memories of that period, all of which involve public rest rooms.

As you parents know, a small child can go for weeks without going to the bathroom at home, but once you hit the road, it becomes pretty much a full-time occupation. During my son Robert's early years, he and I visited just about every men's room on the East Coast. And if it was a really disgusting men's room, a men's room that contained the skeletons of Board of Health workers who died trying to inspect it, Robert would inevitably announce that he had to do Number Two.

So he'd go into a stall and close the door, and his little legs would disappear, and he'd remain there for as long as two days. God alone knows what he was doing in there. Meanwhile, of course, I'd stand guard outside the stall, because you can't leave a three-year-old alone. Inevitably strangers would come in, and there I'd be, apparently just hanging out alone in a men's room, and they'd look at me suspiciously. So in an effort to reassure these strangers that I was a Father on Duty, as opposed to some kind of lurking men's-room pervert, I'd try to strike up a conversation with Robert through the stall door:

ME: So, Robert, my three-year-old son who is inside this stall that I'm guarding as a responsible parent! How's it going in there?
STALL DOOR: (silence)
ME: Ha ha! Speak up, Robert!
STALL DOOR: (silence)

And the strangers would turn and stride quickly out the door, because
nobody wants to be in a public rest room with a person who's talking to a
toilet stall.

Of course, if there's anything more exciting than traveling with a child,
it's traveling with several children. We ourselves have only one child,
because after Beth experienced the Joy and Wonder of natural childbirth, she
decided not to experience it again until modern science invents a method
whereby the man has the contractions. But we have taken Robert's friends with
us on numerous trips, and we have noted a phenomenon familiar to all parents,
namely that you would have less conflict if you put the entire North and South
Korean armed forces in your backseat than you get with just two children.

Children sitting in backseats are incapable of normal human conversation.
Their conversational responses are all intended to raise the level of backseat
hostility to the point where one party has no viable option but to spit Yoo-
hoo into the other party's hair.

Examples

STATEMENT OF CHILD: Hey! I saw a horse!
RESPONSE OF NORMAL HUMAN: Where?
RESPONSE OF OTHER CHILD IN BACKSEAT: So what? (Or: "You did not.")

STATEMENT OF CHILD: I like this song.
RESPONSE OF NORMAL HUMAN: That's nice.
RESPONSE OF OTHER CHILD IN BACKSEAT: So what? (Or: "You do not.") (Or: "This
song sucks.")

STATEMENT OF CHILD: In a right triangle, the square of the hypotenuse is equal
to the sum of the squares of the other two sides.
RESPONSE OF NORMAL HUMAN: That is correct.
RESPONSE OF OTHER CHILD IN BACKSEAT: You suck.

One way to try to reduce the hostility level is to keep the children amused with Traditional Fun Car Games, such as watching for other cars'
license plates and seeing who can find the one from the most distant state.
This exciting activity is sure to captivate the children and provide hours of
enjoyment ("I see one from Iowa!" "No you don't!" "So what?" "You suck!").

But for real family travel fun, there's no substitute for actually reaching some kind of destination. And the Number One family travel destination of all, as measured in total miles of people waiting in line, is
of course:

THE WALT "YOU WILL HAVE FUN" DISNEY WORLD THEMED SHOPPING COMPLEX AND
RESORT COMPOUND

I'm an expert on visiting Disney World, because we live only four hours
away, and according to my records we spend about three-fifths of our after-tax
income there. Not that I'm complaining. You can't have a bad time at Disney
World. It's not allowed. They have hidden electronic surveillance cameras
everywhere, and if they catch you failing to laugh with childlike wonder, they
lock you inside a costume representing a beloved Disney character such as
Goofy and make you walk around in the Florida heat getting grabbed and leaped
on by violently excited children until you have learned your lesson. Yes,
Disney World is a "dream vacation," and here are some tips to help make it

"come true" for you!

When to Go: The best time to go, if you want to avoid huge crowds, is 1962.
How to Get There: It's possible to fly, but if you want the total Disney World
experience, you should drive there with a minimum of four hostile children via the longest possible route. If you live in Georgia, for example, you should plan a route that includes Oklahoma.

Once you get to Florida, you can't miss Disney World, because the Disney corporation owns the entire center of the state. Just get on any major highway, and eventually it will dead-end in a Disney parking area large enough to have its own climate, populated by large nomadic families who have been trying to find their cars since the Carter administration. Be sure to note carefully where you leave your car, because later on you may want to sell it so you can pay for your admission tickets.

But never mind the price; the point is that now you're finally there, in the ultimate vacation fantasy paradise, ready to have fun! Well, okay, you're not exactly there yet. First you have to wait for the parking-lot tram, driven by cheerful uniformed Disney employees, to come around and pick you up and give you a helpful lecture about basic tram-safety rules such as never fall out of the tram without coming to a full and complete stop. But now the tram ride is over and it's time for fun! Right? Don't be an idiot. It's time to wait in line to buy admission tickets. Most experts recommend that you go with the 47-day pass, which will give you a chance, if you never eat or sleep, to visit all of the Disney themed attractions, including The City of the Future, The Land of Yesterday, The Dull Suburban Residential Community of Sometime Next Month, Wet Adventure, Farms on Mars, The World of

Furniture,
Sponge Encounter, the Nuclear Flute Orchestra, Appliance Island, and the Great
Underwater Robot Hairdresser Adventure, to name just a few.

Okay, you've taken out a second mortgage and purchased your tickets!
Now, finally, it's time to ... wait in line again! This time, it's for the monorail, a modern, futuristic transportation system that whisks you to the
Magic Kingdom at nearly half the speed of a lawn tractor. Along the way
cheerful uniformed Disney World employees will offer you some helpful
monorail-safety tips such as never set fire to the monorail without first removing your personal belongings.

And now, at last, you're at the entrance to the Magic Kingdom itself! No
more waiting in line for transportation! It's time to wait in line to get in.
Wow! Look at all the other people waiting to get in! There are tour groups
here with names like "Entire Population of Indiana." There sure must be some
great attractions inside these gates!

And now you've inched your way to the front of the line, and the cheerful
uniformed Disney employee is stamping your hand with a special invisible
chemical that penetrates your nervous system and causes you to temporarily
acquire the personality of a cow. "Moo!" you shout as you surge forward with
the rest of the herd.

And now, unbelievably, you're actually inside the Magic Kingdom! At
last! Mecca! You crane your head to see over the crowd around you, and with
innocent childlike wonder you behold: a much larger crowd. Ha ha! You are
having some kind of fun now!

And now you are pushing your way forward, thrusting other vacationers aside, knocking over their strollers if necessary, because little Jason wants to ride on Space Mountain. Little Jason has been talking about Space Mountain ever since Oklahoma, and by God you're going to take him on it, no matter how long the ... My God! Can this be the line for Space Mountain? This line is so long that there are Cro-Magnon families at the front! Perhaps if you explain to little Jason that he could be a deceased old man by the time he gets on the actual ride, he'll agree to skip it and ... NO! Don't scream, little Jason! We'll just purchase some official Mickey Mouse sleeping bags, and we'll stay in line as long as it takes! The hell with third grade! We'll just stand here and chew our cuds! Mooooo!

Speaking of education, you should be sure to visit Epcot Center, which features exhibits sponsored by large corporations showing you how various challenges facing the human race are being met and overcome thanks to the selfless efforts of large corporations. Epcot Center also features pavilions built by various foreign nations, where you can experience an extremely realistic simulation of what life in these nations would be like if they consisted almost entirely of restaurants and souvenir stores.

One memorable Epcot night my family and I ate at the German restaurant, where I had several large beers and a traditional German delicacy called "Bloatwurst," which is a sausage that can either be eaten or used as a tackling dummy. When we got out I felt like one of those snakes that eat a cow whole and then just lie around and digest it for a couple of months. But

my son was determined to go on a new educational Epcot ride called "The Body,"
wherein you sit in a compartment that simulates what it would be like if you
got inside a spaceship-like vehicle and got shrunk down to the size of a gnat
and got injected inside a person's body.

I'll tell you what it's like: awful. You're looking at a screen showing
an extremely vivid animated simulation of the human interior, which is not the
most appealing way to look at a human unless you're attracted to white blood
cells the size of motor homes. Meanwhile the entire compartment is bouncing
you around violently, especially when you go through the aorta. "Never go
through the aorta after eating German food," that is my new travel motto.

What gets me is, I waited in line for an hour to do this. I could have
experienced essentially the same level of enjoyment merely by sticking my
finger down my throat.

Which brings me to my idea for getting rich. No doubt you have noted
that, in most amusement parks, the popularity of a ride is directly
proportional to how horrible it is. There's hardly ever a line for nice,
relaxing rides like the merry-go-round. But there will always be a huge
crowd, mainly consisting of teenagers, waiting to go on a ride with a name
like "The Dicer," where they strap people into what is essentially a giant
food processor and turn it on and then phone the paramedics.

So my idea is to open up a theme park called "Dave World," which will
have a ride called "The Fall of Death." This will basically be a 250-foot
tower. The way it will work is, you climb to the top, a trapdoor opens

up,
and you splat onto the asphalt below like a bushel of late-summer tomatoes.

Obviously, for legal reasons, I couldn't let anybody actually go on this
ride. There would be a big sign that said:

WARNING:
NOBODY CAN GO ON THIS RIDE.
THIS RIDE IS INVARIABLY FATAL,
THANK YOU.

But this would only make The Fall of Death more popular. Every teenager
in the immediate state would come to Dave World just to stand in line for it.

Dave World would also have an attraction called "Parent Land," which
would have a sign outside that said: "Sorry, Kids! This Attraction Is for Mom
'n' Dad Only!" Inside would be a bar. For younger children, there would be
"Soil Fantasy," a themed play area consisting of dirt or, as a special "rainy-day" bonus, mud.

I frankly can't see how Dave World could fail to become a huge financial
success that would make me rich and enable me to spend the rest of my days
traveling the world with my family. So the hell with it.

Seeing Other Attractions in the Disney World Area

You must be very careful here. You must sneak out of Disney World in the
dead of night, because the Disney people do not want you leaving the compound
and spending money elsewhere. If they discover that you're gone, cheerful
uniformed employees led by Mickey Mouse's lovable dog Pluto, who will sniff
the ground in a comical manner, will track you down. And when they

catch you,
it's into the Goofy suit.

So we're talking about a major risk, but it's worth it for some of the attractions around Disney World. The two best ones, as it happens, are right next to each other near a town called Kissimmee. One of them is the world headquarters of the Tupperware company, where you can take a guided tour that includes a Historic Food Containers Museum. I am not making this up.

I am also not making up Gatorland, which is next door. After entering Gatorland through a giant pair of pretend alligator jaws, you find yourself on walkways over a series of murky pools in which are floating a large number of alligators that appear to be recovering from severe hangovers, in the sense that they hardly ever move. You can purchase fish to feed them, but the typical Gatorland alligator will ignore a fish even if it lands directly on its head. Sometimes you'll see an alligator, looking bored, wearing three or four rotting, fly-encrusted fish, like some kind of High Swamp Fashion headgear.

This is very entertaining, of course, but the real action at Gatorland, the event that brings even the alligators to life, is the Assault on the Dead Chickens, which is technically known as the Gator Jumparoo. I am also not making this up. The way it works is, a large crowd of tourists gathers around a central pool, over which, suspended from wires, are a number of plucked headless chicken carcasses. As the crowd, encouraged by the Gatorland announcer, cheers wildly, the alligators lunge out of the water and rip the chicken carcasses down with their jaws. Once you've witnessed this

impressive
event, you will never again wonder how America got to be the country that it
is today.

And speaking of America, let's talk about taking the children to one of
this nation's many fine:

EDUCATIONAL HISTORIC SITES

Forget it. Your modern child is not interested in educational historic
sites. Your modern child has grown up with MTV and Nintendo; he or she is not
going to be enthralled by watching people in authentic uncomfortable colonial
outfits demonstrate how families in 1750 used to make candles by spinning flax
with a churn, or whatever the hell they did. So you should avoid this kind of
activity. Also you should avoid stopping at those Historical Markers on the
side of the highway that you can never read when you're driving past because
the letters are too small. Here's what they say:

HISTORIC MARKER

> This Historic Marker was erected on this site in the Year of Our Lord 1923 during the administration of Governor Rayford R. "Scooter" Grommet, Jr., to commemorate with great sadness the numerous innocent civilians who are almost definitely going to get hit by traffic when they stop their cars and get out and try to read these really tiny letters.

TRAVELING WITH TEENAGERS

Traveling with teenagers is somewhat more difficult than traveling with
members of the actual human race. It's very important for you to be sensitive
to the fact that, during this difficult transition from child to adult,

your
teenagers are undergoing intense emotional stresses that cause them, for solid
psychological reasons, to regard you as the biggest geek ever to roam the
planet. This is because a teenager's life is an extremely intense, impossibly
complex drama, and you cannot possibly understand the plot. All you can do is
blunder around like some kind of nearsighted elephant, making a mess of
everything, including the seemingly simple act of asking a passing waitress
for ketchup.

YOu: Waitress, could we please have some ketchup?
YOUR TEENAGED DAUGHTER: Oh FATHER! How COULD you?? (Crying, she rushes from
the restaurant.)
You: What did I do? What did I do?
YOUR OTHER DAUGHTER (in the tone Of voice you might use to address an ax
murderer): What did you DO? Do you realize who you just asked for
ketchup?
You: A waitress?
YOUR OTHER DAUGHTER: That was Jennifer Wienerbunker! The captain of the
cheer-leading squad! You asked her for ketchup.
You (raising your voice slightly): But she's a waitress.
YOUR OTHER DAUGHTER: Oh FATHER! (Crying, she rushes from the restaurant.)

Also, teenagers are bored. By everything. Show a teenager an actual
volcanic eruption, in progress, featuring giant billowing clouds of smoke, hot
rocks raining from the sky, lava flows destroying entire villages, etc., and
the teenager, eyebrows arched with sarcasm, will look at you and say, "Gee,
this is swell," then return to the rental car, turn on his portable CD player,
and listen to a band called Stomach Contents.

So as a parent, you may feel that your wisest course is to postpone your
family traveling until your teenage child has reached a more reasonable age,
such as forty-eight. If this is not possible, you'll want to follow the:

TWO Major Rules for Traveling with Teenagers

1. Always Remain Outside of the Embarrassment Zone. If you get too close to
your teenager in public, your teenager will become concerned that other
teenagers might think that your teenager was somehow connected with you,
which of course would be hideously embarrassing. So while traveling you
must always maintain the Minimum Acceptable Public Distance.
2. Find Activities That Are Interesting to Teenagers. If the teenager is
bored with an activity that you have planned, simply select an activity
that he or she might find more interesting. Here is a handy chart to
help you do this:

ACTIVITY THAT WOULD BE BORING FOR TEENAGER	ALTERNATIVE ACTIVITY THAT MIGHT BE MORE INTERESTING FOR TEENAGER
Visiting the Louvre Museum	Leaving the Louvre Museum
Seeing the Crown Jewels	Not Seeing the Crown Jewels
Touring India by Elephant	Anyplace but India Definitely Not on an Elephant.

Chapter Five
See the U.S.A. First!
(WHILE WE STILL OWN PART OF IT)

As Americans, we are fortunate to live in a large nation, of incredible
variety, as is so eloquently described in the moving opening lines of
"America

the Beautiful"

Well East Coast girls are hip,
I really dig those styles they wear.

Yes, this is a land of rich diversity, from the towering skyscrapers of Manhattan all the way to the towering mounds of garbage piled up next to the towering skyscrapers of Manhattan, and you owe it to yourself, as an American, to see it all. Why go to Europe, with its high prices and strange food and incomprehensible lingos, when, with just a little effort, you can find those things right here?

To help you get the most out of your "American Adventure," we've prepared the following state-by-state breakdown of Useful Facts and Tips. The information for this section was obtained via an exhaustive process of typing the name of a state and then trying to remember if we or anybody we knew had ever been there. Also, we got a lot of useful information from our son's encyclopedia, a handy reference work that we always carry along when we travel, which is why we need a back operation.

THE FIFTY STATES

Alabama

Often called "The Pancreas of Dixie," Alabama offers a tremendous amount of culture as well as turnips. The State Flower is the camelia; the State Dog is named "Booger" and you should not wake him up. Montgomery, Alabama, was the first capital of the Confederacy and in 1861 was the site of the inauguration of legendary Civil War coach Paul "Bear" Bryant. Many other fascinating historic and cultural events have also occurred in this

dynamic
state. Ask around.

Alaska

Despite being close to Alabama in the encyclopedia, Alaska is actually
located in Canada. ThiS is only one of the astounding facts about this
dynamic state, which is so big that if you were to walk across it at the rate
of 25 miles per day, you would get moose poop all over your shoes. You find
moose poop everywhere in Alaska. You can buy souvenirs made from it. We once
bought (this is true) some moosepoop swizzle sticks in Alaska's largest city,
Anchorage, where our hotel had a huge stuffed bear in the lobby striking a
pose that said: "Welcome to Alaska! I am going to rip your face off!" Alaska
also contains large quantities of nature in the form of tundra ("tundra" is
the Eskimo word for "nothing") and glaciers, which are enormous pieces of ice
that have somehow developed the ability to creep around, which is a pretty
scary concept and we just hope that they don't learn to walk erect. The
Official State Motto of Alaska is: "Brrrrrrr!" The Official State Bird is
covered with oil.

Arizona

When you think of Arizona, you naturally think of one of the great
wonders of the world, a spectacular natural formation carved out of the rock
over millions of years by the Colorado River, namely: Niagara Falls. But this
dynamic state also features the subtler beauty of the desert ("desert" is a
Spanish word meaning "tundra"), home of the scorpion, which is the Official
State Creature That Crawls into Your Shoe and Can Cause Paralysis. Another

popular attraction is London Bridge, which was transported stone by stone from England hidden in the luggage of a group of very aggressive souvenir-seeking Arizonans on a European tour. They would have got more, but a suspicious British airport security employee opened one of their carry-on bags and discovered a large segment of Stonehenge.

Arkansas

With its ideal location somewhere in the United States that we can never quite picture in our mind, Arkansas offers convenient access to adjoining regions, plus a football team whose fans wear masks with giant hog snouts (at least we assume those are masks). It is little wonder that millions of visitors flock to this dynamic state each year, purchase gasoline, and continue flocking on through. Among the many fascinating historic events that have occurred in Arkansas are the Louisiana Purchase, bauxite, and Hernando de Soto. Also Arkansas once elected a governor named "Orval E. Faubus." The Official State Egg Order is "over medium."

California

The nation's most populous state, California truly lives up to its dynamic nickname, "The Nation's Most Populous State," with enough uniformed parking valets in Los Angeles alone to conquer Eastern Europe. Southern California also boasts more than 57 billion convenient miles of freeway and many fascinating places to visit, although we frankly have no idea which exit you take to get to them. But you should definitely try to find Universal Studios, where you can get a "behind-the-scenes" look at an actual working amusement park, including a terrifying ride where, in the climactic

finale,
you are attacked by a realistic fourteen-ton animated replica of Zsa Zsa
Gabor.

Visitors to Northern California will definitely want to visit Wine Country, where they can snork down a couple dozen free samples and then go
experience the dry heaves amidst the awesome towering grandeur of the giant
redwoods, which are the oldest living things on Earth that are not members of
the Grateful Dead. And of course no trip to Northern California would be
complete without a visit to San Francisco, whose romantic charm inspired the
immortal Tony Bennett song, "Don't Mess with My Toot Toot." Be sure to join
several tons of carbohydrate-bloated tourists for a ride on a quaint cable
car, lurching up quaint "hills" that are actually 800-foot vertical drops as
the cable-car driver dings the quaint little bell, sending out the cheerful
message "ding-ading-ding," which is code for: "Look out, my cable is badly
frayed." California's State Blender Setting is puree.

Colorado

Besides being dynamic, Colorado is best known for the breathtaking beauty
of the Rocky Mountains, which are still visible in some areas peeking out from
under a dense protective layer of condominium units. It's no wonder that each
year millions of skiers come to experience the state's superb emergency
medical facilities! Colorado is also rich in minerals, but so what? is our
feeling. The capital and largest city is Denver, which needless to say boasts
museums, symphonies, etc. You have probably noticed that virtually all

cities, including some real armpits, like to boast that they have museums and symphonies, which are of course the last things that you, the typical visitor, really want at the end of a hard day of traveling. What you want is a motel room that doesn't have hairs on the sheets. The Colorado State Garnish is parsley.

Connecticut

Connecticut, often referred to as "The Nutmeg State" by people who have confused it with Vermont, is famous for being dynamic and containing Yale University, where in 1889 (we are not making this up) the tackling dummy (Or "bloatwurst" [see Chapter Four]) was invented. The state capital, Hartford, is the headquarters of many large insurance companies, so keep your car doors locked. Also be sure to visit Mystic Seaport, where you can see an actual whaling ship in which courageous nineteenth-century mariners went to sea to do battle with monstrous fourteen-ton animated replicas of Zsa Zsa Gabor. Connecticut's official State Prank is the whoopee cushion.

Delaware

Delaware was the first state to ratify the U.S. Constitution, thereby earning it the proud nickname, "The Nutmeg State." Although small in size, Delaware has had a major impact on the nation's destiny: Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, Franklin Roosevelt, and John F. Kennedy all traveled through or flew over Delaware at some time or another, as far as we know. Delaware also boasts dynamism and several million chickens. Reservations are recommended.

Florida

This happens to be our place of residence, and we are not just "tooting our own horn" when we say that no other state offers as many dynamic opportunities to encounter gigantic insects. We have cockroaches here that, instead of scuttling under a counter when you flick on the kitchen light, will pick up your entire refrigerator and lumber from the room. Also in the nature department we have the Everglades, an extremely fascinating natural swamp that inevitably causes the first-time visitor to exclaim: "Huh." The major state industries are tourism, Bingo, obtaining senior-citizen discounts, and not having automobile insurance. The state capital is Epcot Center. The largest city is Miami (official tourism slogan: "Maybe You Won't Get Shot"), a richly diverse cosmopolitan metropolis where people from many different cultures live and work together while continuing to observe the traffic laws of their individual countries of origin. The Florida State Seal depicts a mosquito carrying a machine gun.

Georgia

Although much of Georgia was burned down during the filming of Gone With the Wind, this dynamic state has rebuilt itself and is now an important part of the "New South" (which is similar to the Old South, except most of the pickup trucks are Japanese). Georgia's biggest city, Atlanta, proudly boasts that it has "the nation's busiest airport," although frankly this strikes us as an odd thing to boast about, comparable to announcing that you have the nation's largest epidemic of crotch lice. Other major tourist

attractions
include some big rocks and a great many pine trees that can be seen engaging
in photosynthesis, the Official State Chemical Reaction. Georgia is also the
proud host of the world-famous Masters Golf Tournament of Champions Wearing
Ugly Pants, although of course you personally are not invited.

Hawaii

Visitors to this dynamic island paradise are sure to be greeted by a friendly "Aloha," the all-purpose Hawaiian word that means "Hello," "Good-bye," "I love YOU," "I hate you," and "Give me the fish of your brother
Raoul." Geologically, the Hawaiian island chain was formed when volcanoes on
the floor of the Pacific Ocean spewed out molten lava, which eventually cooled
off and formed large resort hotel complexes. These in turn attracted hardy
Polynesian mariners, who traveled thousands of miles in open canoes, braving
fierce storms that washed all of their consonants overboard, so they arrived
in the Hawaiian Islands with a language consisting almost entirely of vowels,
the result being that all the traffic signs say things like KAIIUUAEIAAA STREET. The modern Hawaiian economy consists of pineapples and pineapple-shaped tourists wearing comical shirts and watching authentic
performances of the hula, in which dancers use traditional arm gestures to
tell the story of how their ancestors, thousands of years ago, used to make
various gestures with their arms. The Official State Motto is "Wai'iu'a'iou'lih'aaaine," but nobody has any idea what it means.

Idaho

Idaho is probably best known for being the state where my wife, Beth, ate
an entire strawberry pie in a diner parking lot. This occurred in 1974 when

we were driving across the country and found ourselves in a city called
"Pocatello," which had a sign that made the proud boast:

POCATELLO
"Crossroads of the Interstates"

So we stopped at a diner there and ate a huge breakfast. We eat a lot on
long trips because we feel our bodies are less likely to become bored if they
can pass the time converting food into fat. We plan our itinerary around
meals ("Do you want to see the Grand Canyon?" "Does it have a snack bar?"),
and our travel memories tend tO focus on food to the exclusion of all other
factors ("Remember Asia?" "Yes! Those little fish rolls!").

So we ate a vast breakfast at this diner, and on our way out Beth noticed
that they had fresh-baked strawberry pies for Sale, and so naturally she
bought one, her reasoning being that Idaho was basically still a wilderness
area and there might not be any other food in it. Her plan was to save the
pie until we really desperately needed it, say in fifteen miles or so, but
when we got into our car, she decided she'd better sample it, in case it was
defective. I was maneuvering the car out of the parking space, and I heard
this unusual noise--a combination of ecstatically passionate moan and
industrial vacuum cleaner--and when I looked over, the entire pie was gone.
Vanished, before we even got to the street. Seventeen years later, the memory
of that pie still brings a dynamic sparkle to Beth's eye that is rarely there
when she looks at me, or even Kevin Costner. Idaho's official State Chemical
Element is helium.

Illinois

Illinois is "The Land of Lincoln," and the memory of "Honest Abe" is so deeply revered there that as recently as 1983 he was elected lieutenant governor. Illinois is also the nation's largest soybean-producing state, although nobody knows what happens to the soybeans after they're grown. You never see them for sale. We think the farmers just harvest them and throw them away.

The largest city in Illinois is, of course, Chicago, which proudly refers to itself as "The City with a Great Big Butt." This dynamic metropolis began as a tiny trading post in the 1600's, when trappers would paddle canoes filled with animal pelts down the Chicago River, then throw them into Lake Michigan, because by then they smelled awful. During World War II scientists started the first controlled nuclear reaction at the University of Chicago. At least it has been under control so far. Some days it gets a little frisky, which is why a lot of smart Illinois residents also maintain residences in Guam. Today Chicago boasts the Sears Tower, which is so tall that occupants on the top floor sometimes have to phone the street level to find out what the weather's like "down there"! These occupants have had a lot to drink.

Indiana

Indiana is a country in Southeast Asia consisting of more than 13,600 islands. No! Wait! We're looking at the encyclopedia article for Indonesia. Indiana is located in the Midwest and consists of less than 13,600 islands. It is called "The Hoosier State," after the sound that pigs make when they

sneeze. Another dynamic activity that occurs there is the exciting Indianapolis 500, where each year the world's top racing-car drivers roar
around the legendary Indianapolis Speedway, again and again and again and
again and again and again and again and again and again and again and again
and again and again and again and again and again and again and again and
again until the excitement and tension become so great that you have to change
the channel and watch Celebrity Turkey Basting (Host: Wink Martindale).
Indiana also boasts higher education and Historic Fort Wayne, where men
dressed in authentic old soldier costumes engage in authentic soldier activities and, if they are not careful, contract various authentic diseases.
Abraham Lincoln also lived in Indiana for a while, but he moved. The Official
State Semi-Obscure Adjective is "febrile."

Iowa

Iowa's Official State Motto is "You Bet," which is what everybody there
automatically says in response to any question:

PREACHER: Do you take this man to be your lawful wedded husband, even if he
gets sick, or becomes poor, or brings home a dog that throws up a semidigested mole head in your lingerie drawer?
IOWA BRIDE: You bet.

Iowa produces dynamic quantities of pork. The other major industry is
making fun of people from Minnesota, who have a big rivalry with the Iowans,
although even scientists using sophisticated instruments cannot tell the two
groups apart. Iowa also offers plenty of culture: In fact, the very name of
the state capital, Des Moines, is French. It means "some of these Moines."

Iowa's Official State Local Boy Who Went on to Become a Famous Dead Movie Star
is John Wayne, whose birthplace is open to the public. We strongly recommend
that you stop for a visit, although we personally shot past it at nearly 80
miles per hour.

Kansas

Although it is now covered with agriculture, Kansas was at one time very
historic. It was the on-scene location of the "Wild West," where "longhorns"
riding "six-shooters" used to "rustle up" some "varmints." This era
eventually ended due to a shortage of quotation marks, but Kansans are still
proud of their state's rough-and-tumble tradition, and will often greet a
stranger by warmly breaking a chair over his head. Kansas also contains
manufacturing and tumbleweeds, which are plants that form themselves into
giant balls that roll across the prairie and burst into your motel room at
night, which is why the American Automobile Association recommends that you
always sleep with a weed whacker.

Kentucky

Kentucky is best known as the state where sleek racehorses drink bourbon
whiskey and smoke the legendary "bluegrass" tobacco, then compete for the
honor of wearing the famous "Kentucky Derby."

Kentucky also leads the nation in the production of bituminous coal,
which is especially valuable because it has two tuminouses. The coal industry
is very tourist-oriented, and members of the public are welcome to strip vast
quantities of irreplaceable topsoil and take it home with them.

Another
"must-see" in Kentucky is Fort Knox, which offers guided tours daily from nine
A.M. until five P.m. to all visitors who make it across the mine field. You
may also want to visit Mammoth Cave, which is an incredibly beautiful and
dynamic natural formation, although unfortunately you can't actually see
anything because it's located underground. The Kentucky State Pruning
Implement is shears.

Louisiana

Louisiana was discovered by the Cajuns, a dynamic group of people who
came down from Canada and decided to stay after they forgot where they had
parked. This kind of thing happens a lot in Louisiana, especially in the
state capital, New Orleans, where the Official Motto is: "Laissez les bons
temps rouler." ("Look out, I'm about to throw up.") New Orleans is a
wide-open town, a town where there is gambling and cursing and heavy drinking
and naked dancing and wild orgiastic sex. And that's just in the police
station. The rest of the city is even looser, especially the French Quarter,
which is so decadent that if the Reverend Jerry Falwell were to merely walk
down the length of Bourbon Street, he would emerge at the other end with an
overpowering desire to purchase leather underwear (Assuming he doesn't have
some already). New Orleans also boasts a number of historic sites, the major
one being Nick G. Castrogiovanni's Original Big Train Bar, which is where,
during the 1988 Republican convention, this author, for sound journalism
reasons, drank a drink called "A Wild Night at the Capri Motel" out of a large
styrofoam container shaped like a toilet.

CORRECTION:

We have been informed that New Orleans is not the state capital of Louisiana. New Orleans is the state capital of Utah. We regret the error.

Maine

During the warm season (August 8 and 9), Maine is a true "vacation paradise," offering visitors a chance to jump into crystal-clear mountain lakes and see if they can get back out again before their bodily tissue is frozen as solid as a supermarket turkey. This dynamic climate has produced a hardy stock of local residents who at first seem a bit "standoffish," although when you take the time to get to know them, you will discover that many of them are actually dead. A major tourist attraction in Maine is Kenneth E. Bunkport IV, the quaint seaside town where George Bush, who is a fiend for recreation, often goes to throw horseshoes at fish from his golf cart. Maine also features numerous fascinating pine trees as well as an average annual precipitation. The Official State Boxed Movie Refreshment is Milk Duds.

Maryland

Maryland is a fast-growing state boasting a dynamic economy based on giving speeding tickets to people attempting to drive through. One of Maryland's major attractions is the Chesapeake Bay, a crab-intensive body of water that gets its name from the Indian word "Cesapiq," which means "Chesapeake." Maryland also contains Baltimore, site of the historic Fort McHenry, where in 1812 Francis Scott Key wrote "The Star-Spangled Banner" to

express the joy he felt after watching the Orioles defeat the Yankees in a critical American League East game. Maryland also boasts the nation's first umbrella factory. Sometimes Maryland gets positively obnoxious, boasting about this. You'll go to a bar where states hang out, and there will be Maryland, after about six shots of Wild Turkey, shouting, "Oh YEAH? Well you wanna know who had the FIRST UMBRELLA FACTORY? Huh? LISTEN TO ME WHEN I'M TALKING TO YOU!" The Official State Sport of Maryland--we swear we are not making this one up, and we urge you to look it up if you don't believe us--is jousting.

Massachusetts

Massachusetts (also an Indian word, meaning "place that is hard to spell") is one of the most historic states in the union, which is why each year tens of thousands of visitors flock here, only to be killed in traffic. In Boston, the drivers refuse to obey even the laws of physics. This is the only place in the United States where the Driver's Manual actually shows you how to give people the finger (Rim shot).

But potential death is a small price to pay for the opportunity to visit the many Massachusetts historic sites that played such a vital role in the formation of our nation--sites such as Plymouth Rock, where the Pilgrims, grateful to have survived a difficult three-month sea crossing, knelt to throw up, and the steeple of the Old North Church, from which silversmith Paul Revere flashed the message that started the Revolutionary War ("Your silverware order is not ready yet"). Massachusetts is also the site of the nation's first college, Harvard, which for more than three centuries has

produced graduates who, no matter what their philosophical differences, are
all dedicated to the lofty goal of subtly letting you know that they went to
Harvard. They never mention it directly. What they do is constantly work the
name "Cambridge" into the conversation. You'll say "Nice day," and they'll
say "Yes! We had days like this in Cambridge!" Or you'll say "Pass the
salt," and they'll say "Certainly! I used to pass the salt in Cambridge!"
The major industries of Massachusetts are having comical accents and expecting
the Red Sox to screw up.

Michigan

Michigan is best known for being the place where, in 1896, Henry Ford
built the first commercially successful automobile, using parts manufactured
by the Toyota Corporation. This resulted in Detroit, a modern dynamic city
that is well worth flying over at a minimum altitude of seven miles. Michigan
also contains the Great Lakes, five mighty bodies of water--Lake Michigan,
Lake Superior, Lake Toledo, Lake Inferior, and the Mayor Earl T. Wonkerman
Memorial Lake--which inspired the great eighteenth-century poet Henry
Wadsworth Allan Poe to write the immortal "Song of Hiawatha":

By the shores of Gitche Gumee;
By the shining Big-Sea water;
Strode the mighty Hiawatha;
In a frock he made from otter.

(Chorus)

Speaking of culture, the World Book Encyclopedia states that every year
Michigan has a "Magic Get-Together" in a city named "Colon." We definitely
think you should check this out.

Minnesota

Minnesota has more than 10,000 lakes, which has earned it the proud nickname: "The Gopher State." The major industries are (1) cows and (2) trying to get cars started, which is very difficult because the entire state is located inside the Arctic Circle. The largest and most dynamic city is Minneapolis (nickname: "St. Paul"), which boasts culture and some nice malls. Also there is a state fair where people make realistic sculptures entirely out of butter. And while you're in Minnesota, be sure to take the whole family on the tour of the world-famous Mayo Clinic, where every visitor receives a free "take-home souvenir spleen transplant." Minnesota's Official State Office Supply is staples.

Mississippi

Mississippi has been unfairly portrayed in movies and TV shows as a backward, poorly educated state where the average resident has seventeen teeth and rides around in a pickup truck with a shotgun and a mongrel dog that scores higher on the SAT tests than the average resident. This is a terribly unfair stereotype. The actual truth is closer to nineteen teeth. No! Ha ha! We're just kidding, Mississippi residents! Seriously, Mississippi is a dynamic and growing state, and many modern technological corporations are relocating there to take advantage of the ready availability of okra. Also Elvis was born in Tupelo, where you can visit his birthplace and possibly meet him in person. You'll also want to visit one of the old plantations, where

attractive hostesses dressed in authentic costumes explain the old traditional
lifestyle and flog an authentic motorized replica of a slave.
MississiPPi's
Official State Motto is "WhooooEEEEE!"

Missouri

Missouri is called "The Show-Me State," because that was the winner of the Dumbest State Nickname Contest, narrowly edging out "The Nanny Nanny Boo-Boo State." The largest city is St. Louis, which features a 630-foot-tall stainless-steel arch, a monument to the early pioneers who came west with nothing but their wagons, their guns, their dreams, and their 630-foot-tall stainless-steel arches. Visitors may ride to the top of the arch, where, high above the Mississippi River, they will experience the thrill of wanting really badly to get the hell back down on the ground. At least that was how we felt.

You'll also want to visit Hannibal, the boyhood home of Samuel Clemens, who grew up, adopted a pen name, and became one of Missouri's, and America's, most beloved characters: Harry Truman. Missouri is also dynamic.

Montana

When we think of Montana, the tourist attraction that of course immediately leaps into our minds is the maggot races at the Town Club Bar in Three Forks. We are not making these races up. The maggots are provided by a man named Darrel Rafferty, owner of Rafferty's Fishbait Company, which sells tubes filled with maggots for bait. So one day a customer was in the Town Club Bar, complaining to Rafferty that he didn't get enough maggots in his tube, so Rafferty said, okay, show me--even though this was not his Official State Motto--and so the customer poured his maggots out on the bar, and some of the more dynamic ones started crawling away, and eureka (Greek, meaning "They probably had a few beers in them") the idea of racing maggots

to raise
money for charity was born. They built a maggot racecourse and took bets and
everything. We spoke to the Town Club owner, Phil Schneider, and he said
they'd hold more races if tourists came around and created a popular demand.
So we definitely recommend that you make this your first Montana stop. Don't
set your food down on the bar.

Other Montana attractions include nature and the headquarters of the
world's largest intercontinental ballistic missile complex, where tourists are
welcome to come in and spin the big "Select-a-Target" wheel.

Nebraska

Although it is usually thought of as a farm state, Nebraska boasts two
area codes, 402 and 308, as well as the National Museum of Roller Skating,
which is in Lincoln and is, shockingly, the only museum in the world dedicated
solely to roller skating. Nebraska is also the only state in the union with a
"unicameral" legislature, defined as "a legislature that bears its young
underwater." But Nebraska was not always a bed of roses. When the first
settlers arrived, they found a harsh, unforgiving place, a vast, treeless
expanse of barren, drought-parched soil. And so, summoning up the dynamic
pioneer spirit of hope and steely determination, they left. But a few of them
remained and built sod houses, which are actually made from dirt. Think about
that. You can't clean a sod house, because it would be gone. The early
settler parents had a hell of a time getting this through to their children.
"You kids stop tracking dirt out of the house!" they'd yell. Nebraska's
official State Weakness is fudge.

Nevada

Let's get one thing straight: There is more to Nevada than just Las Vegas. There is also the part that you have to drive through to get to Las Vegas. Fortunately you can do this at upward of 130 miles per hour, because there is no speed limit in Nevada. In fact there are no laws at all in Nevada. Even murder is legal, but it rarely happens, because people get distracted. A guy will be on his way to kill somebody, and he'll pass a slot machine, and he'll figure, what the heck, so he'll put in a quarter, and pretty soon he's broke and has to pawn his gun to get more quarters. The result is that Nevada has a very dynamic economy, with gambling being the number-one industry, followed closely by blood donorship. Las Vegas is also a cultural center, featuring extravagant theatrical productions in which world-class performers express the artistic concept: "Get a load of these hooters." And definitely do not miss the Liberace Museum, which presents a fascinating piano-oriented view of history. One plaque reads: "With Abraham Lincoln as president, the Civil War was raging when the Steinway Company of New York created this fine piano made of solid rosewood." We can just imagine the scene at the Steinway Company that fateful day: The board of directors is seated around the conference table, grim-faced, and the chairman says, "Gentlemen, Abraham Lincoln is president, and the Civil War is raging! We must make a fine piano of solid rosewood!"

Nevada is also a Mecca for lovers of fine concrete, who will want to visit the Hoover Dam, which was completed in 1936 and resulted in the formation of the Grand Canyon. There is a guided tour of the dam, which your

children will surely want to take seventeen or eighteen consecutive times
while you go back to Vegas and shoot some craps.

New Hampshire

New Hampshire (formerly Vermont) contains many rustic little villages
with names like "East Thwackmore" featuring quaint little inns where the
harried visitor can escape from the high-pressure modern world, with its pesky
flush toilets and central heating. New Hampshire is also the home of the
famous New England town meeting, a dynamic example of "democracy in action"
wherein once a year all the residents of each town gather to lick syrup off
each other's thighs. One of New Hampshire's most popular attractions is the
famous "Old Man of the Mountains," a natural granite formation that, when
viewed from a certain angle, looks like rocks. New Hampshire's Official State
Onion Dip Enhancer is chives.

New Jersey

New Jersey--nicknamed "The New Jersey Turnpike State"--boasts the
nation's densest population and convenient access to a number of important
bridges and tunnels. It's also a dynamic summer playground, drawing millions
of visitors each year to attractions such as Atlantic City, one of the few
seaside resorts that would actually be improved by the arrival of an oil
slick. Among New Jersey's many historic sites is Giants Memorial Stadium,
erected to mark the burial location of Jimmy Hoffa, visitors are welcome to
come place a wreath on his memorial goalposts. The Revolutionary War also
occurred in New Jersey, where on Christmas night, 1776, George Washington

crossed the Delaware River near Trenton and, in one of the great surprise maneuvers in the history of warfare, found a decent restaurant. New Jersey's Official State Disease is gout.

New Mexico

New Mexico offers many fascinating and dynamic attractions that you will want to see before you run out of water and die. For example, you should definitely check out the Native American heritage. If you see some Native Americans, you just say, "Hey! Would you Native Americans mind posing for some pictures here? I got it! How about if you pretend that you're trying to scalp Louise! Ha ha!" This will make you very popular. You might even get invited to go behind a building for a Special Ceremony.

Also be sure to visit Carlsbad Caverns, an awesome geological formation in which visitors may witness the grandeur of more than 250 million bats. Do not startle them. The first atomic bomb was also built in New Mexico and is very slowly being restored to its original condition by workers with tweezers and extremely good eyesight.

New York

"The Empire State" is of course dominated by New York City, the "Big Apple," filled with the bustle and excitement of millions of energetic, sophisticated, urbane people experiencing numerous only-in-New-York thrills such as making it all the way to work without getting peed on. As Frank Sinatra put it in his immortal and dynamic rendering of New York's Official Horrendously Overexposed Hit Show Tune, "New York, New York":

If I can make it there,
I can afford to move to Stanford, Connecticut.

Here are some tips for getting maximum enjoyment from your trip to New
York:

1. Cancel it immediately.

Ha ha! We are just kidding, of course. New York is in fact a major tourist destination, drawing millions of visitors each year, the majority of
whom are never robbed and stabbed and left on the sidewalk to bleed to death
while being stepped over by enough people to Populate the entire state of
Montana. Their secret? They follow certain common-sense New York City safety
rules, such as:

Always walk at least 30 miles per hour.
Always keep your money and other valuables in a safe place, such as Switzerland.
Avoid unsafe areas, such as your hotel bathroom.
Never make eye contact. This is asking to be mugged. In the New York court system, a mugger is automatically declared not guilty if the defense can prove that the victim has a history of making eye contact.

Getting around New York is easy, thanks to the convenient and simple
subway system. The major lines are the IRT, the BMT, the SAT, the LSD, and
QED, which operate crosstown, midtown, downtown, thrutown, and camptown--trains that are local and quasi-express only with alternating
stations northbound between 59th Street and the corner of Twelfth Avenue and
Grant's Tomb only on Wednesdays except during lobster season or for those
passengers holding odd-numbered transfers and claiming more than 8.5 percent

of their gross net deductible pretax noninterest income as medical expenses.
If you have any questions about this, helpful attendants inside bullet-proof
bomb-proof flame-proof machete-proof token-dispensing bunkers will be more
than happy to continue reading the New York Post (Headline: NAB PORN MOM IN
TOT SLASH) no matter how loud you yell. Or for equal convenience you can take
a taxi, which you get by simply raising your hand and then bringing it down
sharply on the heads of the various New Yorkers who will try to leap into the
taxi ahead of you. Be sure to speak very clearly to the driver, as he probably just arrived from a Third World nation where the major form of
transportation is vines. The standard tip for everything in New York City is
a smile and a bright, shiny quarter.

New York State is completely different.

North Carolina and Dakota

These two dynamic states are usually grouped together because they both
begin with "North." The major products of North Carolina are tobacco and
enormous amounts of phlegm. North Carolina also contains the famous "Lost
Colony", ask anyone for directions. North Dakota offers a fascinating array
of wheat; the least-crowded time to visit is February.

Ohio

Ohio proudly calls itself "The Buckeye State," after the buckeye, a dynamic, hairless carnivorous nocturnal rodent that traps its prey by pretending to offer really good discounts on jewelry. The largest city in
Ohio is Cleveland, which, after years of being the butt of many jokes, has
risen to assume its rightful role among major American urban areas as

the
Future Home of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. We personally visited this
attraction, which consisted of an office containing numerous press releases
and a model of what the Hall of Fame would look like if it ever got built.
The model is about the size of a harmonica. We think it would be a shrewd
move on Cleveland's part to keep it on this scale, rather than building a
full-size Hall of Fame, which would probably attract a lot of rowdy people
going "WHOOO!" and throwing up on each other. Also, unlike a large building,
the model can easily be placed in a briefcase and carried around the country
for special events, parties, etc. ("Hey! Somebody sat on the Rock and Roll
Hall of Fame!").

Other major Ohio cities include Akron ("The Rubber Capital of the World")
and nearby Canton ("The Spermicidal Lubricant Capital of the World"). Ohio's
Official State Literary Device is the metaphor.

Oklahoma

The frontier spirit of this dynamic state is best summed up by the Official State Song, from the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical Oklahoma, which
begins:

Oooo-klahoma
If I can MAKE it there,
I'll make it Any where!

This feeling dates back to the famous Oklahoma land rush of the 1880's,
when the government opened Oklahoma for settlement and many would-be settlers
came in "sooner" than they were supposed to, thereby earning Oklahoma its

proud nickname, "The Nutmeg State." Modern Oklahoma boasts both plant and animal life as well as the National Softball Hall of Fame, where every day from nine A.M. until six P.M. visitors may get into bitter, sometimes violent arguments over basically nothing. Oklahoma's Official State Mystery Food Additive is Sodium Erythorbate.

Oregon

Oregon is called "The Beaver State," although the University of Oregon team nickname is the "Ducks," which led to the following actual headline in the Seattle Times when an Oregon women's team lost to a team from the University of Washington (the "Huskies"):

HUSKY WOMEN SUBDUE DUCKS

The major industry in Oregon is trying to locate a tree that does not have an ecologist wrapped around it and then cutting it down and selling it to Japan to be converted into price stickers and pasted onto car windows for sale in the United States. interesting Oregon sights include salmon, which every year return from the Pacific Ocean tO swim up rivers, battling fierce currents, waterfalls, and hungry predators, until finally the survivors reach their spawning area, where, driven by an eons-old instinct, they realize that they forgot to bring the eggs.

Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania is a very historical state, especially Philadelphia, where on July 4, 1776, the Founding Fathers, defying the King and risking execution as traitors, held the Boston Massacre. Visitors to Philadelphia may see

the
famous Liberty Bell, which was built in 1776 for the fledgling American
republic by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, but which never
really rang right because of a crack. Other Popular Pennsylvania attractions
include: Pennsylvania Dutch Country, where visitors may see authentic tourists
eating and looking around for Amish people to stare at; and Hershey, home of
the world-famous Acne Hall of Fame. Pennsylvania's Official State Salad
Dressing is ranch.

Rhode Island

Although it is the smallest state in the union, Rhode Island is nevertheless one of the least interesting.

Ha ha! We are just joshing, of course. This dynamic state is a vacation
paradise, boasting a population, an average annual rainfall, and historical
significance. For example, the Quonset hut was invented here. The official
State Bird (we are not making this up) is a chicken.

South Carolina and Dakota

Living up to their proud nickname, "The States Whose Names Begin With
'South'," these two states offer an endless variety of dynamic places to
visit, the most popular one being the Parris Island Marine Corps Recruit
Depot, where visitors are welcome to lie face-down in the mud for six weeks
while being yelled at by men with no foreheads. A major historic site is Fort
Sumter, where in 1861 Confederate troops fired the fateful shots that struck
Mount Rushmore, causing the formation of giant rock formations shaped like
George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, and Roger

Maris. Also
do NOT miss the spectacular Corn Palace in Mitchell, South Dakota, which is
redecorated each fall with giant murals made from corn, expressing the theme:
"We are going out of our minds up here."

Tennessee

Although Tennessee is what geographers call "a long, skinny state," it
was nevertheless able for many years to contain Elvis Presley, whose Memphis
home, Graceland, draws millions of visitors to marvel at The King's awesome
legacy in the field of interior decoration, including a large room with a
color scheme based entirely on digestive enzymes. Music lovers will also want
to make a "beeline" for Nashville, home of the Grand Old Opera, which stages
works by Wagner, Verdi, and Johnny Paycheck ("Take This Ring Trilogy and Shove
It"). Tennessee also contains the Oak Ridge nuclear facility, where a 1957
laboratory mishap resulted in the Great Smoking Mountains. There are many
other dynamic points of interest you'll want to see, but be on the lookout for
the Tennessee Valley Authority, which is a very large man named Earl M.
Potash, Jr. Do exactly what he says.

Texas

Texas used to be the largest state, but because of Alaska, it no longer
is. Texans are still very touchy about this, so you should be sensitive when
you discuss it with them. "What a large state this is, despite being nowhere
NEAR as large as Alaska!" is a sensitive remark you might want to make.
Although today Texas is modern and, of course, dynamic, it is proud

Of its
cowboy tradition, which can still be seen in the form of men wearing comical
hats. One of the most important historical attractions is the Alamo, the
famous San Antonio mission where, in 1836, a small, brave band of Texans
formed the nation's first car-rental franchise, which can still be seen today.
Visitors are also welcome to the Lyndon B. Johnson Library, but they avoid it
anyway. Texas also contains many scenic hills and rivers, although nothing
like what you see in Alaska (Which is much larger than Texas). The official
State Symptom is irregularity.

Utah

Utah ("The Party State") draws millions of fun-lovers every year to such
dynamic attractions as the Great Salt Lake, where visitors may experience the
excitement of getting salt all over themselves, followed by the excitement of
trying to wash it off. They may not, however, put it in their foods, as
seasonings are prohibited by law in Utah, along with alcohol, cigarettes,
liquor, coffee, tea, and breath mints. The Cocaine, on the other hand, is
distributed free. The official State Theoretical Particle is the quark.

Vermont

(See "New Hampshire.")

Virginia

When we think about all the history that has occurred in Virginia, we
become so overwhelmed that we have to lie down on the sofa and yell for
somebody to bring us a cold beer. Virginia was the site of North America's

first permanent English colonist, James Town, as well as the first House of Burgesses, which was a house where they kept female burges. Tobacco was invented in Virginia, as well as George Washington and seven other U.S. presidents: Jefferson, Monroe, Jefferson, Madison, Park, Lexington, and Third Avenue. The Civil War also occurred in Virginia in a number of national parks. Visitors may witness authentic demonstrations of all of these events, as well as a reenactment of the discovery of the radial tire, at Colonial Williamsburg, where each day men and women wearing authentic eighteenth-century costumes attempt to scratch themselves without anybody noticing. "Dynamic" is a word we would like to include in this sentence.

Washington

Washington is nicknamed "The Evergreen State" because it sounds better than "The Incessant Nagging Drizzle State." The largest city, Seattle, is one of the nation's most dynamic and fast-growing urban areas, with thousands of people arriving each week to enjoy a lifestyle that includes an abundant natural supply of slugs. Mount Rainier, an extraordinarily beautiful volcanic peak some fifty miles from the city, blew up in 1963, but nobody in Seattle is aware of this yet because the weather has been pretty cloudy. Seattle also features a giant Space Needle, which is connected via a monorail to a giant Space Catheter. Washington's Official State Battery Size is AAA.

Washington, D.C.

As an American, you owe it to yourself to visit the nation's capital, because this is your city, where your government spends trillions of your

dollars on dynamic programs such as National Intestinal Blockage Month, administered by your government workers in buildings that you can't go into because you don't have a pass. But you can visit many inspirational tourist sites, including the Richard M. Nixon Monument (currently missing) and the Tomb of the Unknown Internal Revenue Service Employee Who is Supposed to Answer the Taxpayer Assistance Hot Line. You may also visit the White House any time, day or night, simply by pounding on the front gate and shouting vague irrational threats. Another popular Washington stop is the Supreme Court, where the justices frequently ask the spectators to help them decide a tough case by registering their opinions on the Applause-O-Meter. And be sure to visit your congressperson's office, where you are welcome to take some souvenir furniture. Your congressperson probably won't notice. Your congressperson is probably in Paris.

West Virginia

The appeal of this dynamic, rugged state is perhaps best described by the words of mega-weenie John Denver, who sang:

Almost heaven?
West Virginia?

West Virginia has long been a major attraction for tourists who are seeking to escape from their "nine-to-five" office-bound jobs for a chance to get out in the country and mine some coal. West Virginia's residents are all very friendly and closely related. You can meet them "up close and personal" during the state's annual Deliverance Canoe Trip and Pig Imitation Festival.
West Virginia's Official State Toilet Part is the flapper.

WiSconsin

Wisconsin ("The Moo State") is of course best known for being highly cow-intensive, but this state has much more to offer the visitor, as is shown by the following actual quotation from the Wisconsin article in World Book Encyclopedia: "The state is a leader in canning peas." There is little that we can add to describe the raw excitement of this dynamic state, except to say that (1) the malted milk was invented in Wisconsin in 1887, and (2) a Wisconsin store once sold us a rubber hat shaped like a giant wedge of cheese, and quite frankly, when we were wearing that hat we could have had any woman we wanted (Not that we ever did). Wisconsin's Official State Interjection is "Huh."

Wyoming

Wyoming--often called "The Very Last State That We Have to Write About in This Chapter, Thank God"--Contains a great deal of scenery such as the Grand Tetons, which get their name from the Indianexpression, "Get a load of those Tetons." The major attraction is Yellowstone National Park, where nature-loving visitors may learn about the wilderness by witnessing as federal bears, acting on instinct, rummage through Dodge minivans, tossing tourists aside in their quest for Hostess Twinkles. Yellowstone also features Old Faithful Geyser, an amazing natural phenomenon that, at regularly scheduled intervals, erupts out of the ground and performs "Hello Dolly." Tips are appreciated.

HEMISPHERE

(Yes! There ARE Some!)

You don't have to go all the way to Europe to be in a foreign country, because there are several nice ones right here in our own continent. Among the numerous cultural advantages of visiting these countries are the following:

1. They are nearby.
2. They get American TV.

The largest of our North American neighbors are, of course, Canada and Mexico, both of which share lengthy borders with the United States, and both of which have long maintained peaceful relations with us based on mutual trust and respect and a heartfelt understanding of the fact that any time we feel like it we can nuke them into radioactive grit. Let's take a closer look at these two "friendly neighbors" and see if we can't learn to appreciate them more without picking up any actual information.

CANADA

Although we hardly ever think about it except when the TV weather person is showing us a cold air mass, Canada is actually a major country, with an area of more than 169 billion hectometers in longitude, and a bustling population of more than 27 million, if you include members of the wolverine family. There are also a number of humans living up there, and in many ways they have a lifestyle quite similar to ours, including such traditional American activities as driving Japanese cars. The major difference is that Canada is divided into two major linguistic groups--English speakers and French speakers--which have learned, over the course of 300 years of

cohabitation, to hate each other. The result is that everything in Canada has to be written in both English and French, which creates a hazardous situation because the two languages frequently disagree.

Despite these differences, Canada has developed into an actual nation with cities, an economy, comical-looking money with beavers on it, etc. To understand how this happened, we need to review:

The History of Canada

Canadian history began 20,000 years ago when primitive people came across the land bridge from Asia to watch the quarter-finals of the National Hockey League playoffs, which are still going on. Then nothing happened until 1497, when King Henry VII of England hired an Italian explorer named John Cabot to try to reach Asia by--those explorers were always trying wacky stunts like this--sailing across the Atlantic. Instead, Cabot--he could easily have avoided this by the simple precaution of looking at a map--wound up in Canada. Here is an actual quotation about this event from the World Book Encyclopedia:

> Cabot found no such luxuries as jewels or spices. But he saw an enormous amount of cod.

Whoo! I bet THAT thrilled old Henry VII, don't YOu? Picture the scene: he's sitting on his throne, all excited because he's been waiting for months and months, and he can hardly wait to see what kinds of jewels he's going to get for his investment, and Cabot hands him a bag of dead cod and says: "And there's plenty more where THAT came from!"

From that day forward Canada was considered to be very

desirable, and
eventually the British and French got into a big rivalry over it, which resulted in a series of wars called "The Series of Wars Between the British
and the French." This dispute was finally settled in 1763 when the British
forces defeated the French in the Battle of Kicking Some French Butt, after
which the two sides signed the Treaty of the Two Sides, under which Britain
got to keep Canada, and France got to visit for three weeks during the summer.

After that Canada continued to grow and have many important historical
events, among which, according to the World Book Encyclopedia, were: Growing
Discontent, Lord Durham's Report, The Return of MacDonald, and Foreign
Relations. Also at some point a government formed. The Canadian government
consists of a prime minister, whose primary function is to meet with the U.S.
president once a year and ask in a whiny voice how come we keep dropping acid
rain on them. The president always replies that we'll stop the acid rain if
they'll stop the cold air masses. Then the two leaders share a hearty laugh
and shake hands, because they know that we're really close international
friends. Plus we still have the nukes.

What to See in Canada

Canada boasts numerous goose-infested lakes and several major cities that
rival New York for sophistication, defined as lack of parking. There is also
a Vast Arctic Wasteland where visitors are welcome to come and get lost and
try to survive by eating their own parka linings. The Vast Arctic Wasteland
is one of Canada's ten provinces, the other ones being Toronto,

Greenland,
Quahog, Alberta, Pierre, Roberta, North Dakota, Manitoba (Literally, "Many
Tubas"), and the Yucatan. All of these provinces feature culture as well as
hydroelectric power, and are well worth a visit. But the Canadian tourist
attraction that we rank highest of all, despite the fact that we have not
technically been there in person, is the Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump. We are
not making this attraction up. It's an extremely historical site where, many
years ago, Native American tribespersons used to kill buffalo by driving them
off the edge of a cliff. According to the legend, one day a tribesperson
decided to watch this event from under the cliff, and numerous buffalo landed
on his head, which, as you are well aware, is generally fatal, and thus the
site got its name: Total Moron Cliff. No, seriously, it really is called the
Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump, and the Canadian government has set up an
interpretive centre there, and when we called it up, a person answered the
phone as follows:

"Head Smashed In, may I help you?"

This was probably the highlight of our entire life.

MEXICO

The first thing you have to understand, as a visitor to Mexico, is that
you do not, automatically, the instant You arrive, develop a fierce case of
the trots. That's an unfounded myth that epitomizes the condescending
attitude that many North Americans have toward Mexico, and we'd like to
shatter it right here and now. We have personally visited Mexico, and we
found it to be a charming and hospitable place filled with exciting

things to
do, although unfortunately our activities were somewhat limited by the fact
that the instant we arrived we developed a fierce case of the trots. But we
definitely enjoyed what we saw, and we made it our business to see every
single important historic and cultural site in the entire nation that was
within a two-minute sprint of our hotel bathroom. These sites included the
hotel bar, the hotel restaurant, the hotel gift shop, and the hotel hallway
leading back to our bathroom, all of which revealed the rich cultural tapestry
that Mexico Possesses due to all the history that has occurred there in the
past.

The History of Mexico

The history of MexiCo dates back thousands of years to the time of the
Indians, who, of course, were not aware that they were Indians because nobody
from Europe had discovered them yet. Despite this handicap, they had
developed a great civilization featuring many advanced concepts including
mathematics, writing, architecture, a highly advanced calendar (For example,
it had Lincoln's birthday), and an alarm clock with the "snooze" feature.
These Indians built numerous ruins that can still be seen today (Thursday), as
well as a number of major pyramids, which were made by lifting enormous stones
and which served as monuments to Xinzthiznclxn, the God of Hernias. Then, in
the sixteenth century, the Spanish showed up and introduced Western
civilization until just about everybody was dead. This was followed, in
order, by the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, during which
Mexico included a large section of what is now the United States,

including
Texas, California, Hawaii, and Rhode Island. Mexico graciously yielded these
lands to the United States in 1848 under the Treaty of Sign This Treaty or We
Blow Your Head Off. Eventually there was a revolution, starring Seymour A.
"Pancho" Villa, a heroic figure who rode around having exciting adventures
with his comical sidekick and carving his initials into people's shirts with
his sword. Or maybe that was Zorro. But in any event, there was finally a
revolution, and today Mexico is a modern happy nation of 90 million people, 87
million of whom currently reside in Los Angeles.

What to Do in Mexico

Well for one thing, there is a tremendous amount of Mexican food, which
is delicious and perfectly safe as long as you are careful never to get any of
it in your digestive system. You will want to visit the ancient cities of
QuzxnClznaontxnzl, Czqnxzlnqlnxz and Zxqcnxcxnzxclqnxlnzqnlnxn, which offer
thought-provoking, fact-filled lectures by leading cultural anthropologists,
followed by live human sacrifices (Check local listings). Also, you may want
to attend a bullfight, although you must be careful never to stand uP, because
that's how you indicate that you wish to participate in the Amateur Matador
Event.

Chapter Six
Traveling in Europe
("EXCUSE ME! WHERE IS THE Big MONA LISA?")

As a traveler, you will eventually want to broaden your cultural horizons

by visiting the Home of Western Civilization, the source of many of the values
and ideals that we cherish so deeply today, the birthplace of our culture:
Yankee Stadium. But if you get a chance, you should also visit Europe.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF EUROPE

Although from outer space Europe appears to be shaped like a large
ketchup stain, it actually consists of many small separate nations, each with
a proud and ancient tradition of hating all the other ones.

The first European was a Cro-Magnon man who wandered around for about
65,000 years looking for food, only to discover that everything was closed
(this is still true today). So he was hungry and lonely, which led to the
invention of agriculture and, later, the discotheque.

Meanwhile, in Greece, civilization was forming. The Greeks, aided by a
warm climate, had invented geometry, and they used this advanced knowledge to
conquer the surrounding cultures by piercing them with the ends of isosceles
triangles. This led to the Golden Age of Greece, which was marked by the
spread of restaurants to outposts as far away as Brooklyn, parts of which can
still be seen today.

Eventually Greece was conquered by Alexander the Great of Macedonia with
the aid of a new weapon, the rhomboid. Alexander ruled his empire until
somebody did some checking and discovered that there was no such place as
"Macedonia," which paved the way for the Roman Empire. The Romans spent the
next 200 years using their great engineering skill to construct ruins all

over
Europe. The basic Roman ruin design is a pile of rocks with a little plaque
saying "Roman Ruins" and a group of tourists frowning at it and wishing they
were back at the hotel bar.

At this point Europe was invaded by barbarian motorcycle gangs such as
the Angles, the Franks, the Jutes, the Teds, the Sextants, the Ventricles, and
Martha and the Vandellas. This led to the Middle Ages, which were
characterized by strict zoning regulations requiring that every 250 yards
there had to be a giant cathedral built from stones the size of Raymond Burr.
This made life extremely difficult for the laborers--many of whom had never
even heard of Raymond Burr--so everybody was very happy when the Renaissance
broke out in the fourteenth century at about 2:30 P.m.

The Renaissance was a time of cultural rebirth during which everybody
lost a few pounds and started taking night courses. There were many
scientific and technological advances such as the plow, the stapler, and,
above all, the printing press, which enabled mass production of the first
popular work of literature, a novel called Hot Moist Serfs:

> "Priscilla," suib art, unable to retitrain bis puaman anu
> longer. "I want Uou right now, right here, in the burieu
> fielb." Ilriscilla blusbeb, but obe was tiecriettig
> pleaseb, for obe coulb not help but notice that Ntirt bab
> a ui!rtl large plow.

The Renaissance collapsed from exhaustion in 1600, after which everybody
rested up in preparation for the Era of a Whole Bunch of Wars, which included
the Franco-Prussian War; the Franco-Anglo-Russo War, the Hundred Years War,
the Franco-Austro-Russo-Hungro War, The Nine Years War, The Frank

O'Brien War,
The 36 Months or 50,000 Miles Whichever Comes First War, The War of the Tuna
Casseroles, and Super Bowl XVIII. All this conflict caused Europe to gradually disintegrate, so that today it contains many tiny nations, with
names like "Lichtenburg," that could not hold their own, militarily, against
the UCLA Pep Squad. The tragic result is that modern-day European nations
have had to content themselves with developing sound economies, while the
United States, as a Major World Power, has enjoyed the privilege of getting
its butt shot at all over the world.

Nevertheless there are still many exciting things to see and do in Europe, although you, personally, will not get to see and do them, because
you'll be too busy frowning at Roman ruins. The best way to locate these is
to be on a large guided bus tour. You want the kind that stops at everything
in Europe for fifteen minutes, which is just enough time to get off the bus,
take a picture of whatever it is, and get back on the bus, unless you have to
go to the bathroom, in which case you have time to get off the bus, pee on
whatever it is, and get back on the bus. There are many other advantages to
being with a large tour group, such as:

1. It gives you an excellent opportunity to get to know the other couples in
the tour group, which is a broadening cultural experience because some of
them will come from completely different states. You'll end up
exchanging Christmas cards with them for years and years, and when you
die, your spouse will write them a little note, and they'll say:
"Remember so-and-so? From New Jersey? The one we met on the tour? The
one with the big hat? In the plumbing-SUPPlies business? Well,

he
died."
2. In addition to meeting people on your tour group, you will encounter people
from new and completely different tour groups, because you will all be
stopping at the same popular attractions, which have been thoughtfully
preselected for you based on their cultural interest as measured in
square footage of parking area.
3. Many tours give everybody a complimentary plastic flight bag with the
official tour logo printed on it, which you all carry at all times so you
can instantly identify other members of your tour. This is very
important when you are in an emergency foreign situation such as, for
example, the Louvre Museum in Paris, France, and you need to make an
observation such as: "You call that the Mona Lisa? Back home we got
illustrated dish towels bigger than that!"
4. Being on a tour is the only way you can be guaranteed of seeing every
cathedral in Europe. If you were traveling alone, once you realized that
all cathedrals are basically large dark buildings that smell like
unwashed gym shorts, you might, in a weak moment, be tempted to skip one
or two. But this is not possible on a tour. No sir. Your bus will stop
at every single one. In fact, many travel experts recommend that you
take a piece of chalk and place a distinctive mark on each cathedral you
visit, because sometimes the tour guides, as a prank, will take a group
to the same one five or six times in a single afternoon.

Wherever you go on your tour, be sure to take hundreds of color photographs, so that when you get home you can invite your friends and
neighbors over for an educational presentation wherein you say, "Okay, now

this is one of Bernice standing in front of this cathedral in Bologne, which
is in Germany. Or Norway." And Bernice can say: "No, that cathedral is in
England, because I remember I wore my beige pumps in England, because my
maroon pumps gave me this awful blister, which finally popped in Notre Dame,
which is a cathedral in ... Hey! Where's everybody going? There's more
pictures!"

PASSPORT

To enter Europe, You must have a valid passport with a photograph of
yourself in which you look like you are being booked on charges Of soliciting
sheep. To obtain your passport, you must wait in a federal waiting room with
yellow walls for a minimum of two hours, then produce proof of U.S.
citizenship in the form of a personal letter from Publishers Clearing House
notifying you that you have probably won a million dollars.

MEDICAL CARE IN EUROPE

Medical care in Europe is excellent, and you may rest assured that if God
forbid anything were to happen to you, the hospital personnel will use only
the highest-quality stainless-steel drill to bore a hole in your skull to let
out the Evil Spirits.

Ha ha! We are just joshing, of course. There is really nothing at all
primitive about European medical care except that in some countries they
practice it in foreign languages, meaning you run the risk of entering the
hospital complaining of an inflamed appendix and coming out as a member of a
completely different gender. This is why many smart travelers take

the
precaution of having the international symbol for "No Sex-Change Operation,
Thank You" tattooed on or near their private parts (A circle with a line through it superimposed over a pair of pruning shears). It's also a good idea
to take along any prescription medication that you might need, as well as a
spare pair of eyeglasses, some clean bandages, sutures, a scalpel, a wheelchair, and a CAT-scan machine. Feel free to drink the water in Europe,
but don't touch the food.

CUSTOMS

Before they let you into Europe, you have to pass through Customs, so
that beady-eyed individuals can root freely through your underwear looking for
certain items that are strictly prohibited in Europe, such as cold drinks and
functional toilet paper. European toilet paper is made from the same material
that Americans use for roofing, which is why Europeans tend to remain standing
throughout soccer matches.

HelPfUl Hints for Getting Through Customs

Narcotics: You are not allowed to bring narcotics into Europe, and you
are definitely not allowed to sell them to children. It's a good idea to assure the customs personnel that you are aware of these rules. Try to bring
the subject up in a casual manner. "So!" you could say. "Nice weather we're
having here in Europe! By the way, I'm not bringing in any narcotics, and I
certainly don't intend to sell them to children!"

Insects: The Europeans do not want you bringing in insects that will
reproduce like crazy and eat all their agriculture. Any insects you bring in

must be spayed, and you should be prepared to prove it to the customs officials. "Go ahead!" you should tell them in a challenging manner. "Just try to arouse this insect!"

Tipping: Remember that the customs personnel are working men and women just like everybody else, and they definitely appreciate receiving "a little something" in return for a job well done. Your best approach is to hand them a shiny quarter right up front, then, with a wink and a friendly smile, tell them, "Do a good job with these bags, and there'll be another one of these for each of you."

MEASUREMENTS IN EUROPE

Europe operates under the metric, or communist, system of measurement. The main units are the kilometer, the hectare, the thermometer, the pfennig, the megawatt, the libra, and the epigram. These are all very easy to remember because all you have to do is divide them by a specific number, possibly 100. Or you can use the following handy conversion table:

Metric System	Real System
One Kilometer	equals about five miles
Five Kilometers	equals about five miles
Ten Kilometers	equals about five miles
Eight Pentagrams	equals about five miles
1830 Hours	equals about eight days

DRIVING IN EUROPE

Europeans, like some Americans, drive on the right side of the road, except in England, where they drive on both sides of the road; Italy, where they drive on the sidewalk; and France, where if necessary they will

follow
you right into the hotel lobby. If you have a valid U.S. driver's license,
you may drive in most European countries, but it's more efficient to simply
leap off a cliff.

CHANGING MONEY

Aside from not comprehending menus, changing money is the most popular
activity for Americans in Europe. There are money-changing booths everywhere,
occupied by little men crouching inside next to incomprehensible signs covered
with numbers and letters like this:

UAR 23.402490029
UAW 3049.5858, 2 FOR 43-0394-02342
USA 349239%92182
UCLA 37 USC 14 3rd quarter

These numbers change constantly to reflect the fact that the dollar is
getting weaker. The first rule of travel finance is that no matter what is
going on elsewhere in the world, the dollar is always getting weaker where you
are. By the time you've spent a couple of days in a foreign country, the
natives will be blowing their noses on the dollar. To change your money,
simply give the little man enough dollars to buy a decent used car. He will
perform various calculations involving the exchange rate and the Dow Jones
Industrial Average and the relative humidity, then thrust out an amount of
foreign currency so small that if you threw it into a fountain for good luck,
you would immediately be struck by lightning. You should repeat this process
after every meal.

HOW TO USE A BIDET

One of the things you'll need to get used to in Europe is the bidet, which is a bathroom appliance, usually located next to the toilet, that looks like a urinal lying on its back. If you want the Europeans to think that you're a suave and sophisticated person, as opposed to the nose-picking yahoo that you actually are, you need to learn proper bidet procedure. The number one rule is:

1. Never pee in the bidet.

This is extremely important. This is how the Europeans separate the sheep from the goats, sophisticationwise. In fact, it's a good idea, when you emerge from a European bathroom, to state in a loud yet casual voice, "Well, I sure didn't pee in the bidet, ha ha!"

So the question is, what are you supposed to do with a bidet? The answer is: wash your private parts. Really. Now I know what you're thinking, as an American. You're thinking: Wait a minute! Don't they wash their private parts in the shower? The shocking answer is: no. Studies show that Europeans hardly ever even take showers. Highly sophisticated European cultures such as the French also wear the same underwear several days in a row, to the point where individual jockey shorts, when they are finally removed for laundering, have to be subdued with hammers. Thus you can easily see the need for some kind of major hygiene unit in the European bathroom, although you yourself, as an unsophisticated shower-taking American, don't need to bother with it. But to avoid offending your European hosts, you should at least pretend that you

used it when you emerge from the bathroom. "Boy!" you should say. "My
private parts are clean as a whistle!" ("Garron! Mes partes de privatude
sont net comme un sifflet!")

SPECIFIC NATIONS IN EUROPE

As we mentioned earlier, Europe is actually made up of specific nations.
Although most of them belong to the European Economic Community (NATO)--a
multinational organization that administers tariffs, trade, bowling banquets,
etc.--each nation has its own customs, traditions, and hand gestures. So the
remainder of this chapter will be devoted to a country-by-country breakdown,
including helpful tips and points of interest. Although we have made every
effort to ensure that this information is both timely and accurate, please
bear in mind that (1) conditions are subject to change, and (2) we are a big
fat liar.

AuStria

Austria is a very wonderful country that we have fond memories of despite
the fact that, when we went there, virtually every single person we dealt with
tried to shortchange us. We're sure that this was just a fluke, and we are
certainly not going to dwell, in this fair and unbiased travel book, upon the
fact that virtually every single person we dealt with in Austria tried to
shortchange us. "Let bygones be bygones," is our motto. Also several times
people yelled at us for jaywalking. This will happen to you, in the stricter
nations. People over there haven't had a chance to develop an appreciation
for American-style democracy, where it says right in the Constitution

that you
can jaywalk. But aside from the strictness and the constant short-changing we
found Austria to be a really wonderful place, really, even if they did accuse
us, in a particularly nasty manner, of not having paid the rental-car deposit,
and then, after a lengthy argument in which it finally became clear that we
had paid it, they did not apologize at all, but in fact got even nastier, not
that this is important, any more than the CHANGING that appeared to be
sweeping the nation when we were there. Because the truth is that Austria has
many really wonderful attractions, which unfortunately because of space
constraints we are unable to list here.

FACTS AT A GLANCE

Currency Unit: The Pflugenhaffenlepzeigenhohenzollern (or "Winkle")
Language: Foreign
Tipping: Not Permitted
Littering Punishable By: Death
Alps: Yes
Taco Bells: No

BelgiUM

Belgium is a small nation containing people who call themselves--this is
true--"Walloons." They are not ashamed of this at all. "I myself am a
Walloon" is the kind of thing they say all the time. It's called "Walloon
Pride." Belgium also contains people who call themselves "Flemings," although
fortunately there is no actual place called "Flea." The result of this
fascinating cultural mix is that Belgium has a number of official languages,
including French, Dutch, German, Italian, Spanish, Greek, Latin, Cajun,
Moldavian, and Frantic Arm Gestures.

HISTORY: Because of poor planning on the part of its first king,

Roger
XVIXMN (1606-present), Belgium was originally located between Germany and
France, which for several centuries declared war on each other as often as
modern nations declare things like Cheese Appreciation Month. The result was
that Belgium became what historians call "The Screen Door of Europe,"
constantly getting slammed as various armies went racing through in both
directions, often failing to wipe their feet. In the modern era this problem
has been solved by moving Belgium to a safer location, up near the
Netherlands, Denmark, Luxembourg, Iceland, and Canada, which are known
collectively as "The Weenie Nations," so it's perfectly safe now. Although we
ourselves would take a gas mask.

WHAT TO SEE IN BELGIUM: They have a bunch of buildings.

WHEN TO GO: This Wednesday would be good. But not next Monday, because
Belgium has a dental appointment. It is also closed during the festival of
the Six Kinds of Mustard.

FACTS AT A GLANCE

Currency Unit: The Pfarthing
Height: Average
Motto: Dieu et Droit Pour La Veritd ("I Spit On Your Zither")
Favorite Song: "Mustang Sally"

Bulgaria

There's always plenty to see and do in Bulgaria!

Denmark

Denmark (also called "Norway") is best known as the original home of the
prune Danish as well as the Vikings, who Wore hats with horns

sticking out of
them, and for a very good reason: they were insane. But this did not stop
them from being bold mariners who actually reached North America before
Columbus did, although they were stripped of the title when blood tests
revealed that they had used steroids.

Modern-day Denmark is a tourism wonderland, boasting a year-round average
temperature of 14 degrees Centipede (108 degrees Richter). The most famous
city is Copenhagen, where Hans Christian Andersen wrote such pioneering
children's classics as Horton Hears a Whom and The Ugly Teenaged Mutant Ninja
Duckling. While in Copenhagen you simply must take a stroll down
Bjarnkvaalastraadenjkrn, taking a left on Kveljnoriagnarbenkanklen, then your
first right onto Hralgnekjarnklenvaagendam. Go up to a man wearing a green
overcoat and tell him: "The oyster owns a fine wristwatch." He will know what
to do.

FACTS AT A GLANCE

Language: Swedish
Currency Unit: The Rune (12 Runes = 1 Kvetch)
National Anthem: "Vie Aar Knut Hebben Nu Longkenflukn" ("We Are Not Having Any
Lung Flukes")

England

England is one of four nations, along with Ireland, Scotland, and New
Zealand, that make up the British Isles. England is a very popular foreign
country to visit because the people there speak some English. Usually,
however, when they get to the crucial part of a sentence they'll use words
that they made up, such as "scone" and "ironmonger." As a

sophisticated
traveler, you should learn some British words so you can avoid communications
mixups, as is shown by these examples:

Example 1:
The UnSOPhisticated Traveler

ENGLISH WAITER: May I help you?
TRAVELER: I'd like an inedible roll, please.
ENGLISH WAITER (confused): Huh?

Example 2:
The Sophisticated Traveler

ENGLISH WAITER: May I help you?
TRAVELER: I'd like an ironmonger, please.
ENGLISH WAITER: Coming right up!

Speaking of food, English cuisine has received a lot of unfair criticism
over the years, but the truth is that it can be a very pleasant surprise to
the connoisseur of severely overcooked livestock organs served in lukewarm
puddles of congealed grease. England manufactures most of the world's airline
food, as well as all the food you ever ate in your junior-high-school cafeteria. Some traditional English dishes are Toad in the Hole, Bubble and
Squeak, Cock-a-Leekie Soup, Spotted Dick, Bug-in-a-Bucket, Willie One-Polyp,
Tonsil-and-Toast, Whack-a-Doodle Johnson, and Fester Pudding. Attractive
displays of these dishes--some of them dating back to the sixteenth century--can be found in bars called "pubs," where the English traditionally
gather to drink, glance at the food, and continue drinking.

But the main attraction in England is history. You cannot throw a scone
in England without hitting a hallowed ancient object such as the actual chair
that King Ralph the Easily Amused sat in when he made peace with

the Duke of
Whomping in 1123. You should definitely visit as many of these historic sites
as you can before you starve. Among the most important ones are:

The Tower of London: This is the home of the Crown Jewels, a collection
of gem-encrusted swords, headwear, plates, and utensils such as the priceless
Spatula of India, all guarded by the famous "Beefeaters." The Crown Jewels
belong to the royal family, whose members tried for centuries to get them
back, only to have their heads whacked off by the famous Beefeaters, which is
why the royal family now uses paper plates.

Arizona Bridge: This was originally located in Arizona, but was moved to
London as a tourist attraction in 1362 by King Eddreth the Big Fan of Onions.

Westminster Abbey: This is an extremely old building where many famous
dead British people such as John Milton (Bass player for the Kinks), Rudyard
Kipling, and Charlie Watts are buried in the floor. It's not clear why the
British did this. The best we can figure is that it must have been raining
very hard during the funerals, and somebody said, "What the hell, let's just
bury them right here in the floor."

Buckingham Palace: This is, of course, the home of the famous British
royal family, which upholds many ancient cherished British traditions such as
the tradition of Wearing Comical Hats and the tradition of Appearing on the
Cover of People Magazine at Least Once Per Month ("Fergie: Does She Have
Shingles?"). Each day thousands of tourists gather at the palace to watch the

famous ceremony of the Changing of the Guard, which follows the ceremonies of
the Bathing of the Guard and the Sprinkling of Some Talcum Powder on the
Guard's Butt.

FACTS AT A GLANCE

Unit of Currency: The Thruppence (2 Thruppence = 2 Bodkins)
Sign: Capricorn
Track: Wet
Queen's Wardrobe By: Mister Duane's House of Vision Impairment

Finland

Located partly inside the Arctic Circle, Finland has long been a popular
destination with travelers who enjoy the feeling of knowing that if their car
breaks down, they could be eaten by wolves. Finland is also the home of the
sauna, which is a wooden box in which you subject Your body to extreme heat,
which causes you to become very relaxed, unless of course the door gets stuck.
in which case it causes you to become lasagna. We ourselves prefer to stay
outside and take our chances with the wolves.

The major city in Finland is Helsinki, home of the world-famous Gverjkinklankerwanker, or "Tower of Linoleum."

FACTS AT A GLANCE

Unit of Currency: The Fermkin
Form of Government: A small but powerful woman named Helga
Brad: Oh, Marcia, I
have missed you so! Marcia: Oh, Brad, really? (They embrace)

France

First of all, let's dispense with this absurd stereotypical notion that the French are rude. The French are not rude. They just happen to hate you.

But that is no reason to bypass this beautiful country, whose master chefs
have a well-deserved worldwide reputation for trying to trick people into
eating snails. Nobody is sure how this got started, Probably a couple of
French master chefs were standing around one day, and they found a snail, and
one of them said: "I'll bet that if we called this something like 'escargot'
tourists would eat it." Then they had a hearty laugh, because "escargot" is
the French word for "fat crawling bag of phlegm."

This spirit of daring culinary innovation persists in France, which has
also pioneered such advances as:

The entree that costs as much as a set of radial tires and consists of a very
large plate that appears at first to be totally empty except for a tiny
speck of dirt that turns out, upon closer inspection, to be the entree.
(A top French chef can carry an entire year's supply of entrees in his
wallet.)
The waiter who makes it extremely clear that he did not get into the waiter
business to waste his valuable time actually waiting on people,
especially not lowlife scum such as yourself who clearly would not know
the difference between fine French cuisine and Cheez Whiz.
The tip that is automatically included For Your Convenience even if your food
arrives festooned with armpit hairs (les haires du pitte).

So you will definitely want to go to some fine French restaurants. We
don't mean go inside them. We mean stand around outside with the other
tourists staring incomprehendingly at the menu, which should look like this:

CARTE DE MENU

Les Petites Eyeballes de Mackerelle en Huile
de Voiture Le Debenture en Camisole au Bibliothi6que
Le Spamme avec un Side de Fries
Le Poisson du Votre Fr6re Raoul Le Roni du Zoo en La Ware de la Tupper
Prix Pour Le Wholle Ball de Waxe:

156,000,000,000,000,000 Franks.
Le Financing Available

"Vouz Tried the Rest, Now Try Le Best.

Once You've looked at the menu for a while, it's time to enjoy a hearty one-ounce bag of peanuts saved from your plane trip over, then set out to view:

The Attractions of France

One of the main attractions is of course the world-famous Eiffel Tower, which created a lot of controversy when it was erected in 1889 because the builder, Alexandre Gustave Eiffel, had presold it as a condominium. "Where the hell are the walls?" the buyers wanted to know. "Where are we supposed to go to the bathroom?" This is still a problem at the tower, so don't stand too close.

Another well-known Paris landmark is the Arc de Triomphe, a moving monument to the many brave men and women who have died trying to visit it, which we do not recommend because it's located in the middle of La Place de la Traffic Coming from All Directions at 1 14 Miles Per Hour. But you should definitely visit the Louvre, a world-famous art museum where You can view, at close range, the backs of thousands of other tourists trying to see the

Mona
Lisa, which actually was stolen in 1978, but the crowd is so dense that it
doesn't matter. People come away convinced that they've seen it, similar to
the way people in underdeveloped nations are always seeing the face of Jesus
on the skins of yams. Also in the Louvre are various statues with pieces
missing--visitors are welcome to try to patch these up.

A Good Conversation-Starter in France: "I guess you guys really bit the
big one in World War Two, huh?"

FACTS AT A GLANCE

National Underwear Chonging Day: March 1 2
Official Dance: The Gotor

Germany

Germany is really a very nice nation that used to have an unfortunate
tendency to fall in with the wrong crowd every few decades and try to take
over the world. But that is all in the past, thank goodness.

After years of painful division, East and West Germany are finally back
together as a large, vibrant, strong, dynamic, extremely powerful and heavily
armed nation that we are sure will be a Good Neighbor for ... LOOK OUT! HERE
THEY COME!!

Ha ha! We are just poking a little friendly fun at Germany, which is
famous for enjoying a good joke, or as the Germans say,
"Sprechnehaltenzoltenfus senmachschnitzerkalbenrollen." Here is just one
hilarious example of what we are talking about:

FIRST GERMAN: How many Polish people does it take to screw in a

light bulb?
SECOND GERMAN: I don't know! How many?
FIRST GERMAN: Let's invade Poland and find out!
MILLIONS OF OTHER GERMANS: Okay!

No! We're just kidding! Probably! The truth is that we like Germany a lot. In fact, we celebrated our fortieth birthday there with some friends, the idea being that if we were going to get old, we should do it while surrounded by the maximum possible quantity of beer. They have wonderful beer in Germany, and they serve it in containers so large that, in other nations, they would be used as shelters for the homeless. This gives new meaning to the concept of "having a beer." In the United States, "having a beer" is a semi-harmless act that leaves you feeling slightly mellow, whereas in Germany it can leave you dancing naked on the roof of a moving bus (This requires a permit; ask your travel agent).

Eating in Germany is easy, because there is basically only one kind of food, called the "wurst." This is a delicious item made by compressing random pig parts until they have reached the density of bowling balls, then serving them in long brown units that don't look at all like large bowel movements, so just put that thought right out of your mind. At first, all worsts seem the same, but in fact each region of the country has its own "special recipe," thus producing a wide variety for your eating excitement. Some of our personal favorites are:

Blattwurst: Compressed pig parts served in 7-inch units
Grosswurst: Compressed pig parts served in 8-inch units
Wurstwurst: Compressed pig parts served in 7.5-inch units

The list just goes on and on. There is an old German saying that goes,
"By the time you have eaten all of the worsts of Germany, you will have pig
parts coming out the Wazzenschnicter." This certainly proved to be true in
our case.

What to Do in Germany

There are a great many spectacularly beautiful villages in Germany, as
well as numerous important historic and cultural sites, but you should skip
all these because the thing to do is drive really fast. They have these roads
in Germany called "autobahns" (meaning, literally, "bahns of the auto") where
you can go as fast as you want because there is no speed limit. Really! You
can get out there and drive like an amphetamine-crazed maniac, and the police
will do nothing! And if you don't have a car, you can just steal one, because
car theft is also legal on the autobahn! So are vagrancy, tax evasion, mail
fraud, gambling, narcotics trafficking, and full-body massage! You are going
to love the autobahn.

FACTS AT A GLANCE

Unit of Currency: The Doppler
Barometer: Falling
Motto: Vie Guessen Der Coninen Nicht Chompen ("These Dogs Probably Will Not
Bite YOU")

Greece

Greece is where we get a large amount of our Western culture. For example, Zorba the Greek came from there. So did democracy, which is made up
of two Greek words, "demo," meaning "people," and "cracy," meaning

"wearing
stupid hats." The

Greeks also gave us the Pythagorean theorem, although after we graduated
from high school we gave it back.

Getting to Greece

This is a necessary first step.

Attractions to See in Greece

The biggest city that we have heard of in Greece is Athens. According to
ancient myth, Athens was created when Poseidon, the God of Adventure, struck
the ground with his trident, which upset Ramona, the Goddess of Humidity and
Ranch Dressing, who told Dagmar, the God of Variable-Rate Mortgages, who got
so mad that he punched Raoul, the God of Those Little Colored Things You
Sprinkle on Cupcakes, and as a result Athens was formed. Of course we now
realize that this is stupid. Nevertheless many important old monuments remain
from this period, including the Metropolis, the Pentathlon, Monticello, the
Telethon, and the Tomb of Reebok. All of these contain a great deal of very
important architecture that you are welcome to chip off little pieces of for
Show and Tell. Outside of Athens is another popular area known to locals as
the rest of Greece.

FACTS AT A GLANCE

Unit of Currency: The Sheep
Form of Government: Vague
Liquor Bottles with Worms Inside: Yes

Holland

Holland, also known as "The Hinterlands" or "Sweden," is a plucky nation that has created large sectors of new land by pushing back the sea with a sophisticated complex of dikes that have held up extremely well so far thanks to the vigilance of the Dutch people, as dramatized by the story of the Little Dutch Boy. Remember him? He was walking along one day many years ago when he saw a small leak in one of the dikes, so he plugged the hole with his finger, thereby saving the entire nation. Talk about pluck! Of course he's an old man now, and he has taken to telling passersby that one of these days he's going to pull his finger back out of the goddamn dike and the hell with everybody, but this is no reason for you, as a visitor, to be alarmed, because as a safety precaution, every item of furniture in Holland is legally required to also be usable as a flotation device. Your smart tourist never goes anywhere in the country without carrying, at minimum, a dinette table.

What to See in Holland

The largest city in Holland is Amsterdam, a cultural center that boasts many beautiful historic churches that you can later claim you were visiting when You were in fact looking at live naked sex shows involving as many as 117 individual humans and the occasional unit of livestock. Also do not miss the Vincent van Gogh Museum, where you can play the popular Whack-an-Ear Game. Out in the countryside you can see windmills, many of which are still used for milling wind, as well as millions and millions and millions of tulips, so you'll probably just want to stick with the live naked sex shows.

FACTS AT A GLANCE

Unit of Currency: The Grunder
Unit of Livestock's Stage Name: "Bossy"

Iceland

According to a competing travel guidebook, Iceland offers--this is a direct quote--"boiling mud pools." We're on our way!

FACTS AT A GLANCE

Unit of Currency: The Tusk
Biggest Industry: Jumper Cables
Motto: "Skiaorgit Kiooorsklangelt KfvoOOOOO" ("Are There Any Boiling Mud Pools
Around HEEEEEE ...")

Ireland

Ireland is not a large country. A competing guidebook states that "you could drop its entire area into Lake Superior." We certainly do not wish to start rumors, but sometimes we wonder whether these competing guidebooks are on some kind of narcotics. A quick glance at the map will show you that Ireland is in fact nowhere near Lake Superior, which is located in Maine. So if your vacation plans include dropping Ireland into a major body of water, a much better choice, in our opinion, would be the Irish Sea, which is far more conveniently located, although during the peak season we do recommend that you have reservations.

Of course there is more to Ireland than water sports. There is also the Irish people, a warm and friendly lot who are constantly saying things like "Begorrah!" (Literally, "Your brother Raoul is a fish!"). Alcohol will do this to people.

The History of Ireland

The history of Ireland dates back a long time to the original inhabitants, the Picts, who were a fun-loving tribe known for their wit. "You sure Pict a winner that time!" is the kind of thing they were always saying, until finally a neighboring tribe called the Celtics got sick and tired of it and came in and, in 432 B.C. on October 8, defeated the Picts in the Battle of Defeating the Picts when John Havlicek sank two free throws in overtime. This led to a long period of time that is virtually incomprehensible if you read about it in the 1966 edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica, which is what we are trying to do, and we are getting a real headache because of sentences like this:

> A well-known territorial unit was the tricha cet, corresponding, Giraldus Cambrensis says (Topographia Hibernica, III, 5), to the Welsh cantref, 100 households (villae).

Ha ha! We bet that Giraldus Cambrensis was one fun dude to hang around with! But anyway, Irish history continued to occur right up to the present time, which is where, according to our calculations, we stand today.

What to See in Ireland

The main thing to do in Ireland, as Giraldus "Party Animal" Cambrensis states (Topographia Hibernica, IVCXXII, section 3, row d, seat 6), is "sit around and drink." But no trip to Ireland is complete without a trip to Blarney Castle, where you can kiss the famous Blarney Stone, which, according to ancient legend, bestows upon each person who kisses it a mild but persistent mouth fungus.

FACTS AT A GLANCE

Unit of Currency: The Whelk
Households Per Tricha Cet: 100
Shave and a Haircut: Two Bits

Italy

We are definitely talking about a warm and friendly nation here. This nation is so friendly that the leading cause of injury is getting passionately embraced by strangers. One time we were at a restaurant near Rome eating a medium-sized Italian lunch consisting of enough pasta to feed Lithuania for six months, and we happened to mention that the wine tasted good. So the restaurant owner insisted that everybody in our party had to go see his wine cellar, which involved climbing down a set of steep rickety stairs into the kind of dark, dank, spider-infested basement that you often see in horror movies, wherein some doomed character goes slowly down the stairs while dramatic music plays in the background and the theater audience is shouting, "DON'T GO DOWN THERE, YOU FOOL!" because they know there's a lunatic lurking in the darkness with a machete and an industrial staple gun. This basement was like that, only it was occupied by something even more dangerous than a homicidal maniac, namely, numerous barrels of wine, which the restaurant owner insisted that we had to drink many samples from, and quite frankly we wonder how we got out of there. In fact some members of our party may still be down there with the spiders, and we urge you to stop in and see them (the spiders) during normal visiting hours.

Speaking of normal visiting hours, Italy doesn't have any, as far as we can tell. Nothing is ever open when it's supposed to be open or closed when it's supposed to be closed, nor does it cost what it's supposed to cost. Also, the buses never seem to go where they're supposed to go. We realize we're making a sweeping generalization here, but as Giraldus Cambrensis so eloquently put it in Topographia Hibernica, "tough shit." Nevertheless we urge you to spend some time in this country, although as a precautionary measure you should lose a couple of hundred pounds first.

What to See in Italy

The major city is of course Rome, which got its name from the fact that the Romans used to live there before the Fall of the Roman Empire. Their mother warned them that this would happen. "If you leave your empire there, it's going to fall!" she said, but unfortunately they did not understand English.

Nevertheless, the Romans built many large broken objects that you should definitely see, such as the Renaissance, the Piles of Seemingly Random Dirty Stones, and the Colosseum, which was the site of Super Bowl I. You must also visit Vatican City, where you may see the famous Sistine Chapel, which the famous Anthony L. "Michael" Angelo had to paint--Believe It or Not!--while lying on his back, because due to a contractor error the Sistine Chapel is only 18 inches high, so comfortable clothes are recommended. The Vatican is also the home of the Pope, who, if you pound very hard on his door, will be happy to come out and entertain the kids by twisting balloons into

hilarious
animal shapes. Elsewhere in Italy is the lovely city of Venice, which each
year attracts millions of visitors despite the fact that it is basically an enormous open sewer; and Florence, home of one of Michael Angelo's most famous
works, the Leaning Tower of Pisa. Southern Italy is the site of the incredible village of Pompeii, which nearly 2,000 years ago was buried under
tons of volcanic ash and is therefore invisible. We don't know why we even
brought it up.

FACTS AT A GLANCE

Unit of Currency: The Lira (1,000,000,000,000,000 lire = Nothing)
Unit of Time: "A Few Minutes" (A Few Minutes = Two Days)
Hand Gestures: Permitted

Liechtenstein and Luxembourg

To the best of our knowledge these are not European nations. These are
minor characters in William Shakespeare's famous play Hamlet II: The Next Day,
featuring the famous "shower scene" wherein the immortal bard displays his
rollicking wit at its best:

LIECHTENSTEIN: What dost thine taxon augur vepnelsound? Nor capsuled repwell
florgin haren't ground!
LUXEMBOURG: Ha ha!

Norway

See "Denmark."

Poland

Poland has experienced a tremendous amount of history due to the fact
that it has no natural defensible borders, which makes it very easy to conquer. Many times the other nations didn't even mean to invade

Poland; one night they'd simply forget to set the parking brakes on their tanks, and they'd wake up the next morning to discover that, whoosh, they had conquered Poland.

But thanks to advances in international law such as the speed bump, Poland is now a totally independent nation, and it has managed to greatly improve its lifestyle thanks to the introduction of modern Western conveniences such as food. Today Poland proudly boasts the nickname "The North Dakota of Europe," and is well worth a visit if you happen to be in the neighborhood for some reason, such as your plane has crashed.

What to See in Poland

They have some really sharp tractors.

FACTS AT A GLANCE

Unit of Currency: The Grzbwczwcz
Population: 30 million
Light-Bulb-Changing Capability: 10 million

Portugal

Portugal is a small but, we are sure, proud nation located somewhere in Europe and boasting a history. During the Age of Exploration, Portugal produced many great navigators, men such as Vasco da Gama (literally, "Vasco the Gama"), who set out across the vast, stormy Atlantic Ocean in tiny ships, which of course immediately sank like stones, thus paving the way for the Age of Remaining on Land. Today the main industry in Portugal is manufacturing the famous Portuguese man-of-war, which is a type of jellyfish that can sting you to death if provoked, so tipping is strongly recommended.

FACTS AT A GLANCE

Unit of Currency: The Arriba
Language: None

Spain

At one time Spain was one of the world's great powers, although under the leadership of General Francisco Franco (1578-1983) the nation gradually declined into total insignificance. There is no need, however, for you to rub this in. Be gracious, is our advice. For example, in a restaurant you might exclaim: "This food is certainly delicious! Especially considering that Spain is now a fourth-rate power!"

Your hosts are sure to appreciate your thoughtfulness, and may even insist that you join in one of Spain's most glorious traditions: Getting Run Over by Bulls. This extremely exciting event, wherein live irate bulls are set loose in public streets, was originally held during the Festival of St. Raoul of the Fishes (October 8), but it has become so popular that in heavily touristed areas the bulls are released several times a day, sometimes in hotel lobbies. Wear comfortable shoes.

FACTS AT A GLANCE

Unit of Currency: The Caramba
Closed: Weekdays

Sweden

See "Norway."

Switzerland

When we think of Switzerland, the picturesque image that springs into our minds is that of men standing on top of Alps wearing comical shorts and making sounds that can only result from a major hormonal imbalance. But Switzerland is also famous for its tidiness. It makes some of the other tidy nations, such as Germany and Austria, look like giant septic tanks. Switzerland has an extremely strict Neatness Code. If you appear in public with your hair mussed up, or armpit stains on your shirt, the famous Swiss Neatness Police will suck you up with a giant vacuum cleaner and put you in a jail cell infested with sanitary laboratory rats. You would probably rot in there, but Switzerland doesn't even permit bacteria.

What to Do in Switzerland

You should open a Swiss bank account, because (a) you get a toaster and (b) you never have to pay income taxes again. The Internal Revenue Service has no jurisdiction in Switzerland. When you fill out your tax return, you just write, "Ba ha, I have a Swiss bank account and just TRY TO GET IT, YOU SUCKERS!" and all the IRS can do is gnash its teeth. You can trust us when we tell you this. We're a guidebook.

FACTS AT A GLANCE

Unit of Currency: The Cubit
This Chapter Is Finally: Finished
Time for a: Beer

Chapter Seven
Staying in Hotels
(OR: WE'RE VERY SORRY, BUT YOUR CHAPTER IS NOT READY YET)

Your hotel is your "home away from home," and as such you expect it to provide you with the comforts and conveniences you have in your own dwelling, such as privacy, security, a warm bed, a clean bathroom, a hot shower, Anthony Perkins standing just outside the shower curtain holding a knife the size of New Jersey, etc.

Of course we are just pulling your leg. Despite the widespread recurring nightmares created by the movie Psycho, the truth is that, of the millions of guests who stay in the nation's hotels each year, only about 3 percent are ever actually stabbed to death while in the shower (Source: The American Automobile Association). A far higher percentage are stabbed to death while talking really loud in the halls at 2:30 in the morning. If you've ever stayed at a hotel, you have heard these people. They stagger up from the bar, then they stand directly outside your room and, in booming voices, have conversations like this:

FIRST LOUD PERSON: Well, it's about time to turn in!
SECOND LOUD PERSON: I guess so! What time is it?
FIRST LOUD PERSON: Whoa! It's 2:30 A.M.!
SECOND LOUD PERSON: Whoa! It's time to turn in!
FIRST LOUD PERSON: I'll say it is!
SECOND LOUD PERSON: Two-thirty A.M.!
FIRST LOUD PERSON: Whoa!
SECOND LOUD PERSON: It's definitely time to turn in!
FIRST LOUD PERSON: I'll say it is!
SECOND LOUD PERSON: You can say that agAAAAAAIEEEEEE (sound of both loud

persons being stabbed to death by pajama-clad hotel guests who have

lunged out into the hallway wielding shrimp-cocktail forks obtained

earlier from Room Service)

There is no need to concern yourself about this. At your better hotels, the bodies will be picked up within hours. Other signs that you are in a quality hotel include the following:

1. You can never be sure which floor the lobby is on. A quality hotel will have about six Mystery Floors where the lobby should be, identified on the elevator buttons only by code letters such as G, P, M, LL, and Ph.D. Guests from hotel-deprived regions such as MississiPpi will sometimes become disoriented and ride the elevator for days, surviving on complimentary pillow mints donated by other guests.

2. You have to tip roughly a dozen men just to check in. The instant you arrive at a quality hotel, at least two friendly men dressed in nicer outfits than you wore at your first wedding will bustle up, open the car door for you, and say: "Welcome to the Hyatt Sheraton Hilton Crowne Royale Majestic Princess! Let us assist you with your luggage!" Even if the airline lost your luggage and your total possessions consist of a package of Tums, these men will snatch it away from you and assist you with it. The instant you tip them, they will hand your luggage to other uniformed men, who will pass it along to still other men, until you are being assisted by roughly one uniformed man for each actual Tum.

3. The bellperson will not leave you alone in your room until he has given you a briefing lasting at least as long as your sophomore year in high school. This will include such helpful information as:

Where the bathroom is.
Where the windows are.
Where the bed is.
Where to find the complimentary bathrobe that you are welcome to take with
you, in which case they will be happy to add a charge of $298 to your
bill.
Where the bathroom is again, in case you forgot.
How you operate the television (By turning it on).
What the bellperson's name is (Bob) in case you need anything (Such as you
feel a sudden urge to give somebody a tip).

The only thing the bellperson will leave out is the part about how you will have to get up at 2:30 A.M. to kill the loud hallway talkers, but this is because he doesn't want to spoil the surprise.

4. There will be a choice of siX in-room movies, (Including The Bad News Bears) all of which you have already seen except for the dirty one. However, we do not recommend that you watch the dirty movie, because it will go on your hotel bill, which could cause embarrassment when you check out the next morning and the desk clerk, in a hearty voice that echoes all over the lobby, says: "We certainly hope you enjoyed your stay at the Hyatt Sheraton Hilton Crowne Royale Majestic Princess, Mr. Penderson, especially your in-room viewing of Big Hooter Mommas." Also every hotel, no matter what level of quality, is required by state law to have a little framed document in every room with the following notification:

NOTIFICATION

in accordance with sec. 3.409583 par. 2343.4, be advised that the operator of this hotel is not responsible for any

loss, theft or damage to any jewelry, money or other valuables that you may sustain because of carelessness, burglars, or anybody else sneaking into your hotel room in the dead of night armed with guns, knives, cattle prods, deadly poison black mamba snakes or whatever you better just give them whatever they want because the owner is not going to get involved even if they tie you to the bed with the belt from your complimentary bathrobe and torture you by pouring your complimentary hair conditioner into your eyes you can go ahead and scream all you want because in accordance with sec. 3.409583 par. 2343.4. be advised that ha ha the operator of this hotel does not have to do shit.

STAYING AT QUAINT LITTLE COUNTRY INNS

Of course sometimes you get sick and tired of staying in big, modern hotels, where all you are is an impersonal room number, and nobody ever talks to you, and you never have to share a bathroom with total strangers. For a change of pace from this kind of stifling uniformity, you want to stay at a quaint little country inn.

The best kind of quaint country inn is the kind that's owned and operated by a couple named Dick and Marge who've been married for roughly 158 years and are bored to death with each other and consequently are thrilled that you have come out into the country to give them somebody to talk to and eavesdrop on and study the personal habits of. "Don't mind me!" Marge will say eight or nine times just during breakfast, which you eat at a table located approximately four feet from where she is working in the kitchen. "I know you two are here for a romantic weekend, and I don't want you to even notice I'm here! Although Dick did want me to ask you to please not flush any more condoms down the toilet like you did twice last night, because sometimes they

mess up the septic system. We had one couple from New Jersey, the Floogermans, and they were using the Trojan lubricated condom with the reservoir tip, and they flushed four of them on one night, let me see"--she consults her records--"it was the night of June 12, 1987, and next day we had raw sewage in the azaleas, and Dick--Dick loves those azaleas--he had a fit. He even--get this--he even got out his old machete and sharpened it up. I said, 'Dick, what are you gonna do? Chop off their heads just because they flushed some condoms down the toilet?' Ha ha! I had to give him one of those shots to calm him down, and he still carries a little piece of paper in his wallet with the Floogermans' home address. He LOVES those azaleas. But listen to me chattering on! You just never mind me over here. Do you want some more waffles? I didn't even realize you could have waffles, if you were diabetic, which I'm assuming you are from those pills in your toiletries case with your Valium. Lately I just can't seem to get Dick to take his medication, and I really wish he would because he's started talking to his snakes again. I wish we didn't even have those things in the house, after what happened to those people from Ohio, the Fweemers. Although I understand that a lot of the time those paralysis things are temporary. But listen to me! Here I am talking a mile a minute, and you two lovebirds are trying to have a quiet breakfast alone! I do tend to rattle on so, and sometimes Dick--I'm sure he's just kidding--sometimes Dick says if I don't shut up, he's gonna put me down in the basement, with those things he ordered from Soldier of Fortune magazine. Don't go down there, whatever you do. But you just make yourselves totally at home here, and enjoy your time together, and do

whatever
you want and just forget that we're even here. By the way, that light fixture
over your bed is just a light fixture. It is not a camera. Here comes Dick
now! What's the matter, honey?"

Chapter Eight
Camping: NATURE'S WAY OF PROMOTING THE MOTEL INDUSTRY

So far we've discussed many exciting travel destinations, but all of them
lack an element that is too often missing from the stressful, high-pressure
urban environment most of us live in. That element is: dirt. Also missing
from the urban environment are snakes, pit toilets, and tiny black flies that
crawl up your nose. To experience these things, you need to locate some
Nature and go camping in it.

WHERE NATURE IS LOCATED

Nature is located mainly in national parks, which are vast tracts of wilderness that have been set aside by the United States government so
citizens will always have someplace to go where they can be attacked by bears.
And we're not talking about ordinary civilian bears, either: We're talking
about federal bears, which can behave however they want to because they are
protected by the same union as postal clerks.

You also want to be on the lookout for federal moose. I had a moose
encounter once, when my wife and I were camping in Yellowstone National Park,
which is popular with nature lovers because it has dangerous geysers of

super-heated steam that come shooting up out of the ground, exactly like in New York City, except that the Yellowstone geysers operate on a schedule.

Anyway, one morning I woke up and went outside to savor the dawn's ever-changing subtle beauty, by which I mean take a leak, and there, maybe fifteen feet away, was an animal approximately the size of the Western Hemisphere and shaped like a horse with a severe steroid problem. It pretended to be peacefully eating moss, but this was clearly a clever ruse designed to lull me into believing that it was a gentle, moss-eating creature.

Obviously no creature gets to be that large by eating moss. A creature gets to be that large by stomping other creatures to death with its giant hooves.

Clearly what it wanted me to do was approach it, so it could convert me into a wilderness pizza while bellowing triumphant moss-breath bellows into the morning air. Fortunately I am an experienced woodsperson, so I had the presence of mind to follow the Recommended Wilderness Moose-Encounter Procedure, which was to get in the car and indicate to my wife, via a system of coded horn-honks, that she was to pack up all our equipment and put it in the car trunk, and then get in the trunk herself, so that I would not have to open the actual door until we had relocated to a safer area, such as Ohio.

This chilling story is yet another reminder of the importance of:

SELECTING THE PROPER CAMPSITE

Selecting the proper campsite can mean the difference between survival and death in the wilderness, so you, the woodsperson, must always scrutinize the terrain carefully to make sure that it can provide you with the basic

necessities, the main one being a metal thing that sticks out of the ground
where you hook up the air conditioner on your recreational vehicle. I'm
assuming here that you have a recreational vehicle, which has been the
preferred mode of camping in America ever since the early pioneers traveled
westward in primitive, oxen-drawn Winnebagos--Of course there are some
thoughtful, environmentally sensitive ecology nuts who prefer to camp in
tents, which are fine except for four things:

1. All tent-erection instructions are written by the internal Revenue Service
("Insert ferrule post into whippet grommet, or 23 percent of your gross
deductible adjustables, which-ever is more difficult").
2. It always rains on tents. Rainstorms will travel thousands of miles
against the prevailing winds for the opportunity to rain on a tent, which
is bad because:
3. Tents contain mildews, which are tiny one-celled animals that are activated
by moisture and immediately start committing one-celled acts of
flatulence, so that before long it smells like you're sleeping in a giant
unwashed gym sock.
4. Tents are highly attractive to bears. When bears are young, their parents
give them, as a treat, little camper-shaped candies in little tent
wrappers.

So I'm recommending a major recreational vehicle, the kind that has a
VCR-equipped recreation room and consumes the annual energy output of Syria
merely to operate the windshield wipers. Other wilderness survival equipment
that you should always take along includes:

A hatchet, in case you need to fix the VCR
Cheez-Its

A flashlight last used in 1973, with what appears to be penicillin mold growing on the batteries

And speaking of penicillin, you need to know:

WHAT TO DO IN A WILDERNESS MEDICAL EMERGENCY

Experts agree that the most important rule in a wilderness medical emergency is: Keep your head down on the follow-through. No! My mistake!
That's the most important rule in golf. The most important rule in a wilderness medical emergency is: Don't panic. To prevent the victim from
going into shock, you must reassure him, as calmly as possible, that everything's going to be fine:

VICTIM (clearly frightened): Am I going to be okay?
You (in a soothing voice): Of course you are! I'm sure we'll find your legs
around here some place!
VICTIM (relieved): Whew! You got any Cheez-Its?

Once the victim has been calmed, you need to obtain pertinent information
by asking the following Standard Medical Questions:

1. Does he have medical insurance?
2. Does his spouse have medical insurance?
3. Was he referred to this wilderness by another doctor?
4. How much does he weigh?
5. Does that figure include legs?

Write this information down on a medical chart, then give the victim a
1986 copy of Fortune magazine to read while you decide on the correct course
of treatment. This will depend on the exact nature of the injury. For example, if it's mushroom poisoning or a broken limb, you'll need to apply a
tourniquet. Whereas if it's a snake bite, then you need to determine whether
the snake was poisonous, which will be indicated by tiny markings on the
snake's Stomach as follows:

WARNING! POISON SNAKE!
ACHTUNG! SCHLANGE SCHNAPPENKILLEN!

In this case, you need to apply a tourniquet to the snake.

FUN FAMILY WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES

There are so many fun things for a family to do together in the wilderness that I hardly know where to start. One proven barrel of wilderness laughs is to try to identify specific kinds of trees by looking at the bark, leaves, federal identification plaques, etc. This activity is bound to provide many seconds of enjoyment for the youngsters. ("This one's an oak!" "No it's not!" "You suck!") Later on, you can play Survival Adventure, where the children, using only a compass and a map, must try to figure out what city Mom and Dad have driven to.

But the greatest camping fun comes at night, when everybody gathers around the campfire and sings campfire songs. Some of our "old family favorites" include:

I've Been Workin' on the Railroad

Oh, I've been workin' on the railroad,
With a banjo on my knee.

We will kill the old red rooster

We will kill the old red rooster
We will kill the old red rooster
And you better not get in our way.

Michael Row the Boat Ashore

Michael row the boat ashore,
Alleluia!
Michael row the boat ashore,

Alleluia!
Michael row the damn boat ashore,
Alleluia!
Lenore threw up in the tackle box.

Camptown Races

Camptown ladies sing this song:
Doo-dah, doo-dah
Camptown ladies been off their medication
And they are none too fond of the old red rooster, either.

After the singing, it's time for Dad to prepare the children for bedtime by telling them a traditional campfire story. To qualify as traditional, the story has to adhere to the following guidelines, established by the National Park Service:

1. It has to begin Many Years Ago when some people camped Right in This Very
   Forest on a night Exactly Like Tonight.
2. People warned them not to camp here, but they paid no attention.
3. People said, "I wouldn't go back in there if I were you! That's the lair
   of the [select one]:

   a. Snake Man!"
   b. Swamp Devil!"
   c. Giant Radioactive Meat-Eating Box Turtle of Death!"

4. But the campers just laughed.
5. "Ha ha!" were their exact words.
6. Until they found little Jennifer's gallbladder on the Hibachi.

And so on. Dad should tell this story in a soft, almost hypnotic voice, lulling the children into a trance-like state in which they are aware of nothing except the story and the terror and the still, sinister darkness all around them and

OH MY GOD! IT COMES

And then it's time for everybody to "call it a night" and climb, all five
of you, into the sleeping bag with Mom.

WELCOME HOME!
OR: "THAT'S ODD! OUR HOUSE USED TO BE RIGHT HERE!"

As we have seen in the preceding chapters, traveling is a tremendous
amount of fun, but eventually, you become too tired and broke and diseased to
continue. Then it's time to come home, drop your suitcases right at the front
door, kick off your shoes, and stagger into the kitchen to quench your thirst
with a nice cold ... NO DON'T OPEN THE REFRIGERATOR AIEEEEEE ... You have no
idea what kinds of fierce predatory meat-eating fungi have been growing in
there (Sometimes in less than an hour) while you were gone. They've been
feeding on the highly nutritious Chinese take-out food that you've been wisely
storing in the back of your refrigerator for several months in case it
suddenly appreciates in value. Your refrigerator has developed individual
mold spores the size of Doberman pinschers, and they are going to be very
angry if you just barge into their territory and try to grab something. The
American Medical Association, in an alarming 1989 report (There is no further
information contained in this footnote) stated that the leading cause of death
among Americans returning from trips is being attacked by refrigerator mold.
"Never enter your kitchen after a trip without a working flamethrower in your
hand," advises the AMA.

This is assuming, of course, that you still have a kitchen. There's

always the possibility that your house has burned down, and the only thing
that survived the fire is the stack of credit-card bills documenting all the
shrewd purchases you made on your trip, such as the $197.50 Authentic Souvenir
Limbo Stick that was confiscated by U.S. Customs because it contained lethal
parasites.

And even if your house is still there, there's always the chance that your plumbing--which has sophisticated electronic sensors so it knows the
instant you leave home--has developed a leak, which doesn't sound like such a
big deal until you consider that the Grand Canyon, for example, is basically
the result of water damage.

And speaking of damages, you should check the dense growth that has
sprung up around your house in case it contains the moaning, semi-deceased
body of a mailperson or door-to-door salesperson, or meter reader, or one of
the dozens of other people who could have visited your house while you were
gone and tripped on a Dangerous Hazard in your yard, such as the ground,
causing him to fall and severely injure his back, resulting in so much Pain
and Suffering that he has been unable to move, except of course to notify his
attorney and put a down payment on a motor yacht the size of Utica, New York.

But never mind these temporary problems. The point is that you had fun,
right? Remember the Old Traveler's Saying: "You may lose your money and your
health and your sanity and some important organs, but they can't take away
your travel memories unless they hit you hard on the head." These are the

words I live by, as a traveler, and in these pages I've tried to share my vast knowledge with you as a way of saying "Thank You!" for buying this book.

Unless Of course you just borrowed this book, in which case I hope that the next time you travel, your luggage winds up on a space probe.

About the Author

Dave Barry is a Pulitzer Prize-winning syndicated columnist at the Miami Herald. His books include Homes and Other Black Holes, Dave Barry's Greatest Hits, Dave Barry Slept Here, and Dave Barry Turns 40, among others.